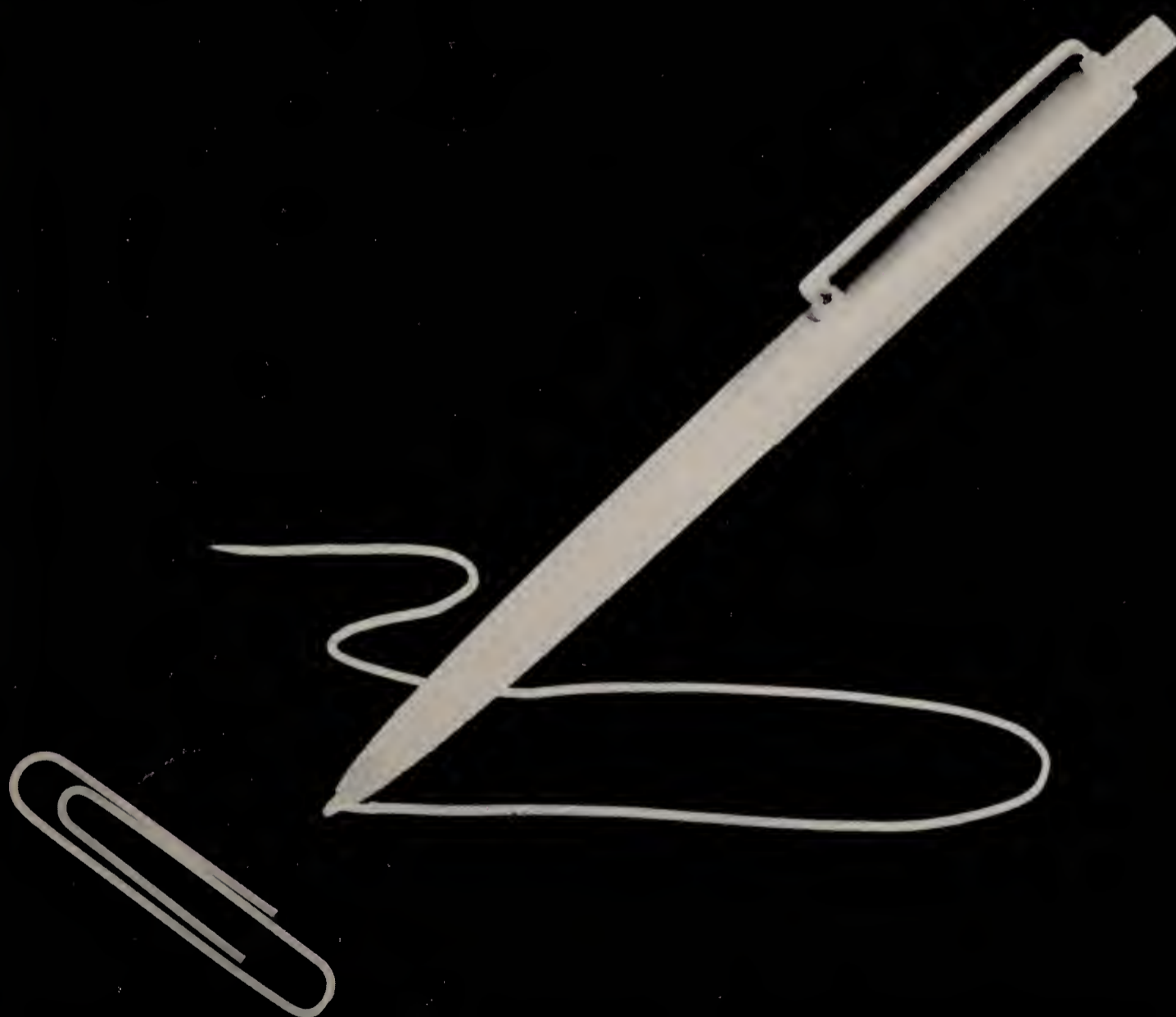


SKYLARK



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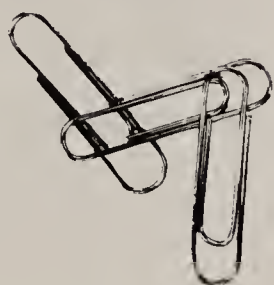
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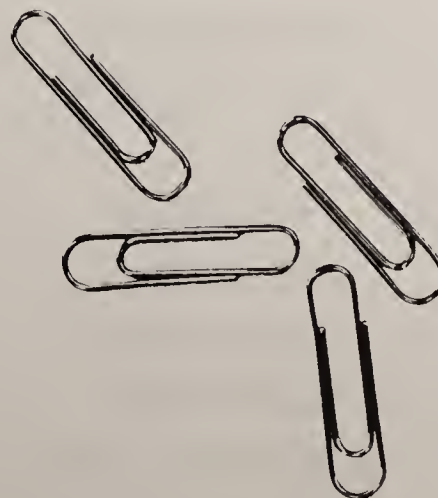


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IN MEMORIAM

The 1993 issue of SKYLARK is respectfully dedicated to the memory of two longtime members of the Purdue Calumet community—Harold Von Horn, poet (Department of Mathematics) and John Mohamed, artist (Department of Communication and Creative Arts). Their works can be found elsewhere in this issue. (We wish to thank Mrs. Von Horn and Mrs. Mohamed for sharing their husbands' works with us.)



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THE
BOUNDARIES
OF
THE
CAMPUS
ARE
THE
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OF
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Photos by Pamela Hunter



*Photo courtesy of Purdue University Calumet
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TO THE READER

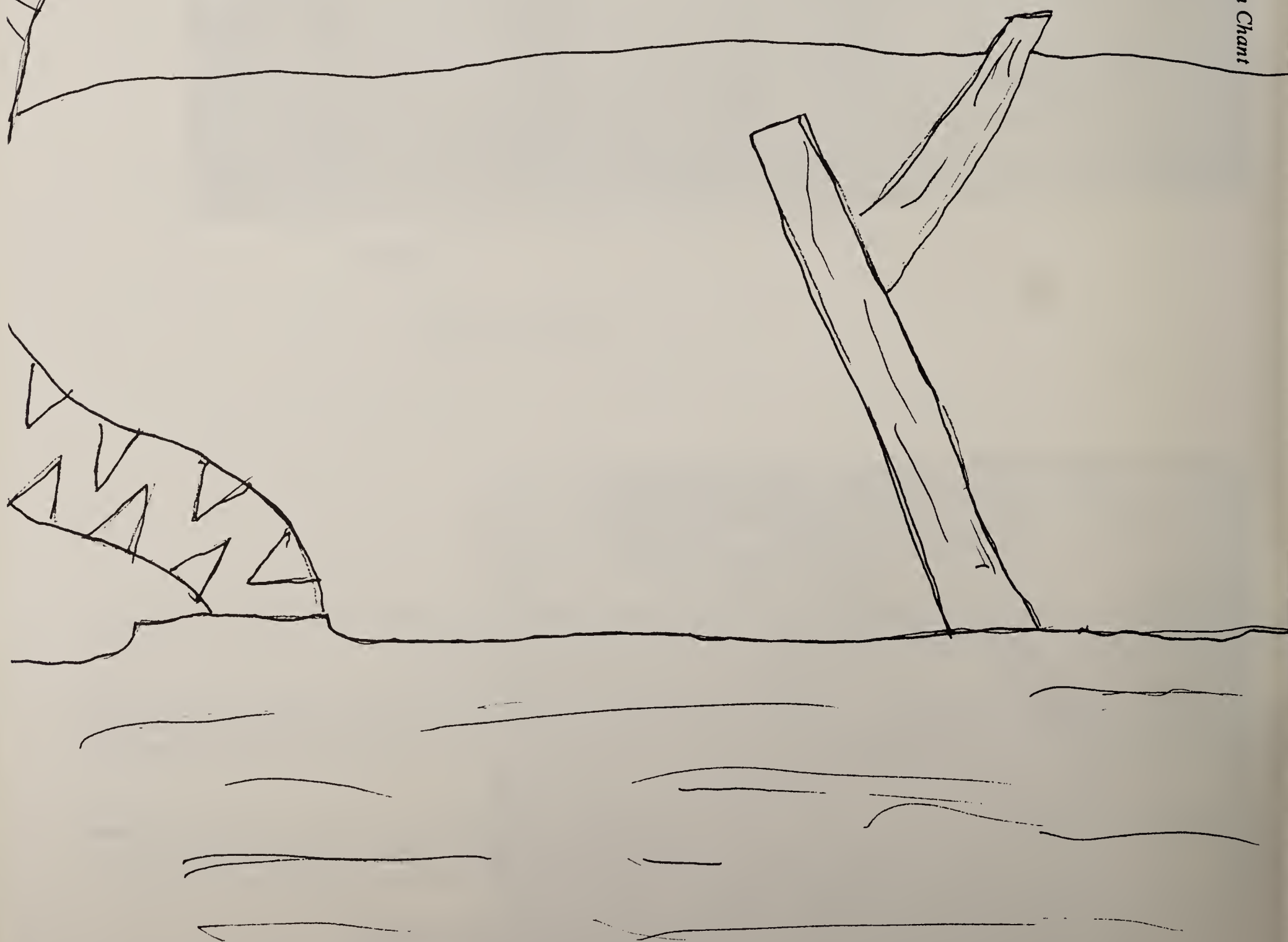
For the University, I welcome you to the twenty-second edition of the **SKYLARK**. The contributors to the 1993 **SKYLARK**, and its staff, are to be congratulated for continuing a fine tradition of excellence in collegiate publication.

Each successive year the contributors and staff have built upon the quality and experience gained from previous editions of this publication to produce one of the finest university literary magazines. Literally hundreds of writers over the years have written, revised, and honed their thoughts for inclusion in the **SKYLARK**. Year after year the awards received by contributors to **SKYLARK**, and **SKYLARK** itself, attest to the quality of writing and editing we have come to expect.

Even after two decades plus two years this publication remains vigorous. I believe this vigor results from the University's involvement with our community and the community's contribution to the life of the University. The **SKYLARK**, a remarkable production in its own right, is a model of the quality that can be achieved when people of great heart and good will work together for the benefit of all.

James Yackel

Chancellor



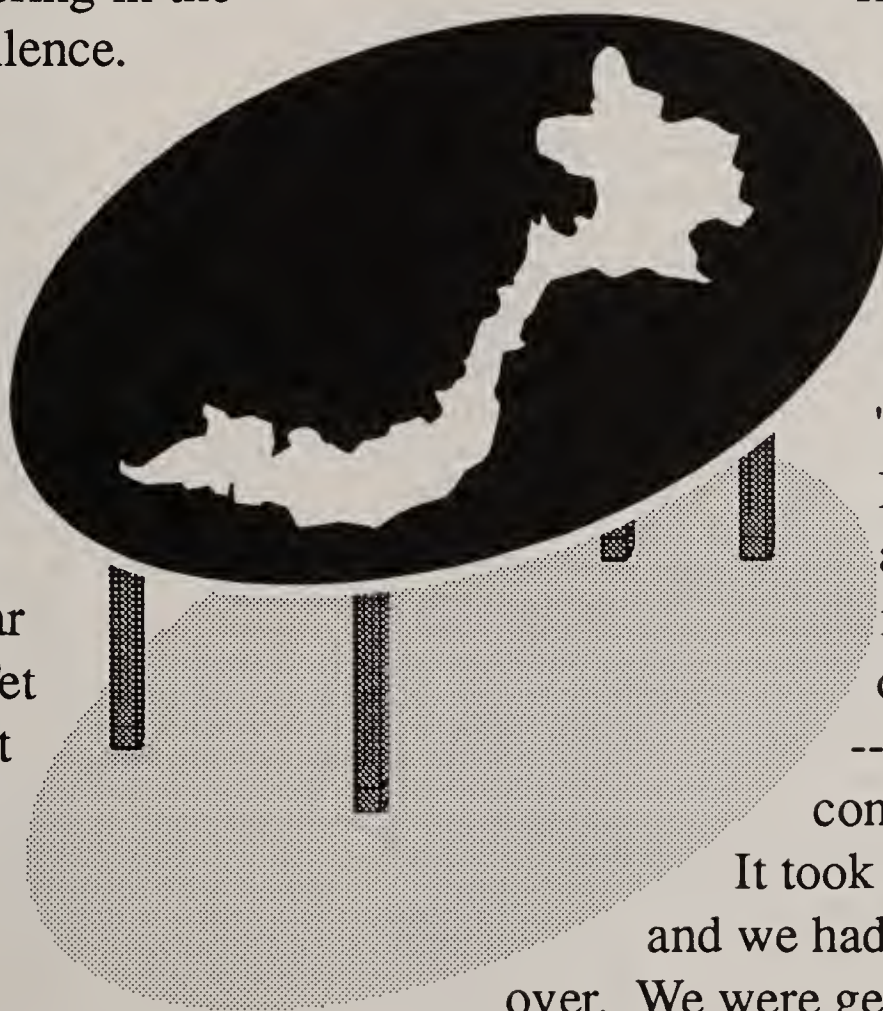
*Illustration by Brian Hunter, Age 10,
Kenwood School, Hammond, Indiana*

THE SHAPE OF THINGS

by
Tom Ewart

It was always a little weird walking into the hamlets. We'd be strung out single file along a narrow dirt road leading off the highway. The South Vietnamese infantry unit attached to us -- mostly kids in their teens, and so not too much different from ourselves -- would be deployed to our front and rear, checking for booby traps, covering our backs. We, the U. S. Army medics, together with an interpreter, would be grouped in the middle of the file. Through the brilliant sun-dappled green of the bush bordering the road, we could see the water shimmering in the rice paddies. The strangest thing was the silence. Everybody would be up ahead in the ville, waiting for us.

It was the middle of 1968, one of those "of love" back in the World. we were in another world the Mekong Delta, not far river, not long after the Tet In May, our field hospital unit without the comedy -- had troop ship from Stateside. to get across the Pacific, think about on the way naive, and needed some justification for the course of action in which we were to participate, so we convinced ourselves that, distasteful as all this might prove to be, we were going to be doing the right thing: helping a beleaguered people determine the shape of their own destiny.



summer,
"summers
However,
altogether:
from the
offensive.

-- M*A*S*H

come in a

It took us a month
and we had a lot to
over. We were generally

On the way over, the Paris Peace Talks began. Everybody became initially hopeful we'd all be home before the coming Christmas. Two weeks later, we steamed into Vung Tau harbor. By then, the delegates in Paris had just started to discuss the shape of the table they might consider using at the peace negotiations. We privately began to doubt the sincerity of the head honchos involved.

When we landed in-country, we discovered we couldn't move into our own unit's compound. It had been blown apart during the Tet offensive, and reconstruction was not yet complete. So we convoyed everybody and everything up to a huge military complex just outside Saigon. There we were temporarily assigned to a hospital unit like our own. We kept busy nursing wounded GIs. I drew a night shift—six in the evening to six in the morning—on an intensive care ward.

My first night there, I cared for a big black guy who'd stepped on a mine not long before. When he emerged that night from his morphine haze, he realized he'd lost both his legs and one arm near the shoulder. He wanted company, and I was it. I sat by his bed through the rest of the night, holding his remaining hand, watching him die. He babbled on about there being no point since his girl friend wouldn't want him now, given the shape he was in.

About a month later, we relocated to our own compound in the Mekong Delta and opened up shop. Our hospital was part of the military's pacification program; our humanistic efforts were designed to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese peasants. Ambassadors after our own fashion, we made these side trips to the local hamlets as sort of a mobile sick call.

It was from a village chief that we first heard about the orphanage. He said it was in one of those old French villas about a mile away, near the river, just outside the province capital. Two ancient Vietnamese, a Catholic priest educated in Paris and a Buddhist monk who'd been to China, kept the place together. Both spoke French and English as well as the native lingo. The two had gathered up all the orphaned kids in the area, the ones who had nowhere else left to go. Given all the recent activity, things were getting desperate there. We decided to check it out.

The place had a lot of land, almost all of it flat, much of it spongy except for a slight rise on which the house was built. The house itself had seen better days. White faded paint blistered and peeled, and almost all of the tall narrow windows were broken. The trees nearby had been blasted long ago by mortar fire.

Inside the place was a mess. It had been stripped bare; what stuff there was had been scrounged by the priest and the monk. Mostly this was sleeping mats for the kids, and a few ammo boxes to keep things in.

There wasn't much food, and the kitchen was a sewer. In the john, the toilet was on the blink, so everyone used a trench in the back. Water was pulled from a well nearby.

The priest was named Father Ngo. A small thin man, he wore loose black trousers and a shirt with a regulation Roman Church collar. His round gold-rimmed specs reminded me of Ghandi, only he wasn't bald, and his hair was still largely black. The monk was also thin, but you could tell by the way his skin hung on him that he'd once been on the portly side. He was as bald as a cue ball; the blue of his veins throbbled against temples the color of curry. A soiled orange robe hung loosely from his bent shoulders. His name was Nguyen. What a surprise.

The big surprise was the kids. They didn't seem at all shy, and were very curious about us. Immediately they crowded around us, chattering away; they looked slightly lost in the emptiness of their ragged clothes. For the most part, they ranged in age from infants to about fourteen. We learned that girls older than that were usually sent to farms in the province; many of them were pregnant by the time they got to the fields. Older boys weren't allowed to hang around the villa knocking up any more sweet young things, so they'd go off to catch the action. Often this was with Charlie out in the bush, although some joined the local militia units like the one with us.

The kids that were left behind were a sickly lot. We saw plenty of skin and bowel diseases, malnutrition, and some malaria. Quite a few had open sores or improperly healed wounds; one boy had severe napalm burns on his legs. The blackened flesh looked rubbery when it got wet.

We did what we could, even hospitalized some of them. The priest and the monk said the main thing they needed, aside from the protection no one could give them, was more food. That, and materials with which to make much-needed repairs around the old villa. We gave them the name of the area Pacification Liaison officer. We knew how effective that would be.

It wasn't long before a few of us decided to adopt the orphanage. We snuck out of our compound what we could—meat going bad that soon would be dumped, some damp and swollen sacks of rice, the few medicines and bandages we could safely filch from the ward supply closets. Two guys from the motor pool went down there

with us and fiddled with the plumbing and the water pump and got the toilet half-assed working again. We ripped enough shingles off another abandoned place to patch the villa roof. We did what we could, but much of what we did was just moral support—teaching the kids to play baseball, for instance. The priest and the monk really got into being coaches.

Our excursions to the orphanage usually happened on Sundays, when we had the best chance of getting away from our own duty rosters. The priest and the monk always pressed us to stay for an afternoon dinner, and we usually did. We'd all sit around on woven mats, cross-legged, with our bowls in our laps. Despite small portions by American standards, we were careful not to take any seconds; we left what little remained for the kids. After dinner they'd melt outside to play, and we'd then sit with the two old men, watching the iridescent sunset, talking about the times, and smoking them if we had them.

The priest and the monk were anxious to know when peace would come. They were hopeful about the Paris Peace Talks. We no longer shared their enthusiasm. The negotiators had already been arguing for several months now about the shape of the table they could maybe all agree to even sit at. We had come to realize the talks would probably drag on as long as the war already had. Still, we tried not to discourage the priest and the monk about what we saw as a game on the part of those calling the shots.

The two old men told us that many of the kids did not know what peace really was. Oh, they knew the word, all right—it was often on their lips these days—and they had some vague idea of what it was supposed to mean. But all their short lives they had heard the bombs bursting in air, had felt the heat of the fire in the hole, had lived with the screams of their neighbors and parents reverberating endlessly behind their dark startled eyes. On a day-to-day basis, they had never lived in peace. They wanted to be able to count down the days until it arrived.

Things went along pretty smoothly for a while. Then one night all hell broke loose. Charlie reactivated his rocket launchers; he must have gotten resupplied down the Ho Chi Minh trail. We could see the fires down by the river from our hospital compound.

As the sky turned the most amazing shade of delicate morning pink, things quieted down, and the medevacs started bringing in the casualties on the choppers. The orphanage had taken a direct hit—probably in retaliation for its relationship with us. Charlie wasn't big on our winning the hearts and minds of the people.

The priest was dead, his chest blown open. The monk was walking around in a daze, holding his withered hand to a bleeding ear. Many of the kids were done for when their rooms exploded in a fireball, caving in the whole corner of the roof over them. The ones that were left were in real bad shape. A little girl about two had lost most of her face; it had been torn off by flying debris. She'd live, whether she wanted to or not. We doubted anybody would ever be in a hurry to knock her up. There were legs and arms that had been amputated or that now would have to be. One boy about nine, tall for his age, a kid we all thought was developing into a good first baseman, had both legs crushed when the huge center beam of the villa let go. He came in holding the mitt we had given him. We got to work.

Afterward, exhausted and soaked in other people's blood, we sprawled outside in the shade of a wall and listened to the radio. We watched the distant trees shimmering in the boiling air. From the ward inside, we could still hear the moans of the kids. We smoked them if we had them.

On the radio, the music ended and the news came on. The announcer updated us on the Paris Peace Talks. Negotiations were still stalemated over the shape of the table. We thought about how children were being butchered while those in charge argued geometry.

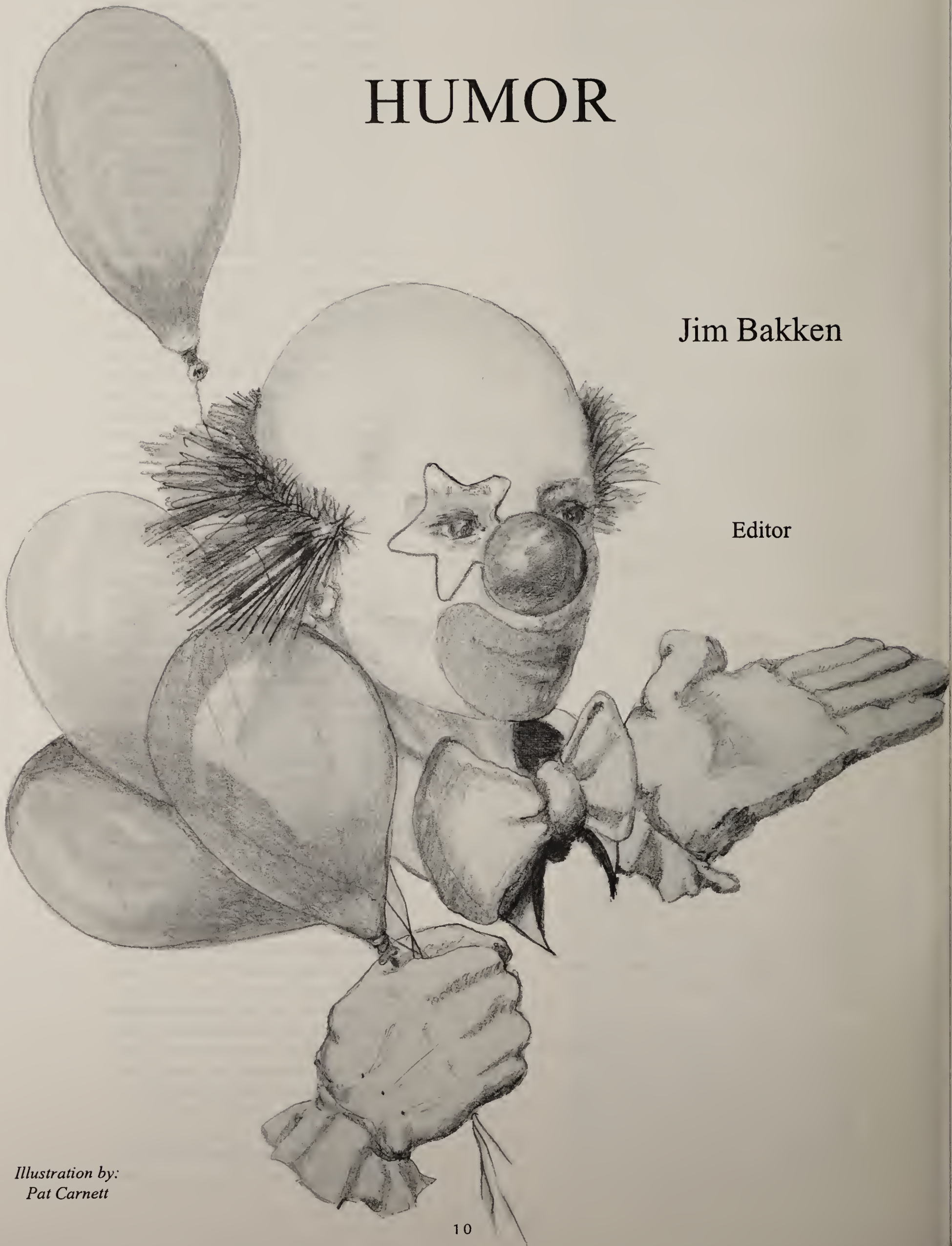
By this time, some of the guys in our unit were “getting short.” We didn't talk about when peace would come, but about how many days we had left in-country. All this delay over the shape of a table was just shaping up coffins for everybody here. If we lived long enough, we'd get to go back to the World when our time here was up. We hoped our lives would shape up for us then. We tried not to think about the kids inside. For them, this *was* the world, one which would always be bent out of shape. Their time here would never be up—unless, of course, they got short of it.

T. Ewart lives in Worcester, Massachusetts.

HUMOR

Jim Bakken

Editor



*Illustration by:
Pat Carnett*

A REAL FISH STORY

By

Nancy J. DeMello

"I'm a little nervous," Mary Anne admitted, taking a seat. She twisted her hands in her lap, turning to be sure the portly receptionist had closed the door behind her. "I don't want you to think I make a habit of coming to see—I mean I never needed to pay for this kind of—that is—"

Dr. Sheridan held up a hand and smiled reassuringly. "Just try to relax, Miss Lafferty," he soothed, pushing the start switch on the tape recorder sitting inconspicuously on the side of his desk. "Can I call you Mary Anne?"

"Sure. Of course," she agreed, and looked at her watch anxiously.

"You have plenty of time—"

"Yes," she interrupted, smoothing her skirt over bare knees. "I don't exactly know how to start, but right off I should tell you I'm sort of mixed up, although Roger says I'm totally neurotic, and I do have this twitch in my left eye sometimes when I get nervous, but I'm sure I'm not schizophrenic or crazy like some of your other patients." She took a long breath and swallowed hard in embarrassment.

Dr. Sheridan looked somewhat amused as he gazed at the tall, rather thin young woman. He nodded slowly, twirling his cultivated mustache. "I'm glad to hear it, because frankly I'm not much good at treating them."

She opened her mouth to speak and then shut it abruptly, wondering if he was making a joke. She cleared her throat and smiled crookedly, her pale face turning several shades darker.

Dr. Sheridan suppressed a laugh. He felt quite sure he would make it through this session without total boredom encompassing him. The schizos, psychotics, manic-depressives and rapists had stimulated and enthralled him twenty-five years ago, but over the past few months, realizing his youth was far behind him, and with the remainder of his hair resting on his

upper lip, he had grown increasingly depressed at having spent the best years of his life exploring the dark recesses of abnormal psyches.

"Please continue," he said, "and I want you to know I'm recording this, mainly because I have a poor memory, and I can't read my own notes."

Mary Anne inhaled and exhaled deeply, wether colorless lips and looked straight at the doctor. "I think I came to see you because I just don't have anyone to talk to now that Felicity is gone. I'm not sure I know anybody else who is completely normal any more. But I'm definitely not coming back here again even if you think I should because your fee is exorbitant, and it's really a shame that you have to be rich to be crazy," Mary Anne concluded breathlessly.

"My dear girl, try to calm down," urged the doctor. "My fee is based upon the hour, not the word. And to be honest, I can't comprehend everything when a patient talks too fast."

"Oh, of course," laughed Mary Anne apologetically. She pushed a long strand of shining black hair away from her eye with a bony white hand. "I guess I *WAS* rambling a little."

"Who is Felicity?"

"My cat, of course. I mean she was. She's dead now. And it's all Darryl's fault." She sniffed, running a finger under her slightly moist nose. "I lent him Felicity because he was so depressed after being fired from the supermarket, and I thought she would cheer him up, you know?"

"I'm trying to," answered Dr. Sheridan slowly. "Who's Darryl?"

"Oh, Darryl's my kid brother. Actually, he's twenty-eight and a little eccentric, but nothing like Uncle Windham. I mean *HE* was such a hypochondriac they finally had to institutionalize him, especially after the hairball incident."

Dr. Sheridan licked his lips and studied

the plain, though animated, face, wondering if he should bite. He still had no clear understanding of why this thirtyish woman was here, but he was hopeful she would provide the answer before senility struck him.

"Hairball?" he repeated.

Mary Anne nodded. "You see, until this happened, Uncle Windham loved cats too. Cheetah was great company, and even slept with him. He never married, you know, and suddenly he developed this hairball in his stomach—"

"Uncle Windham?" the psychiatrist asked incredulously.

"No, *CHEETAH!*" Mary Anne said impatiently. "The vet said it was caused by him licking his fur all the time. Uncle Windham became completely unglued over this and kicked the cat out, saying cats repulsed him now. From then on he was very strange, vacuuming up hairs every day even when there were none left. Only a week later poor Cheetah got run over by a dirt bike right outside his apartment, and all he could say was, 'One less hairball-maker to worry about.'"

"Certainly he wasn't committed for throwing his cat out?"

"Oh, no. He started to get symptoms of bloatedness, and naturally ran right to his number-one doctor who told him it was just nerves. Well, Uncle Windham has six different doctors and went to all of them complaining of a hairball mass in his stomach. They just laughed and gave him some placebos. But he insisted they do exploratory surgery, claiming he used to kiss Cheetah all the time and was always pulling cat hairs out of his mouth. He was sure that over the years several million of them had formed a basketball in his gut."

Dr. Sheridan sat up straighter, taking a deep breath, hoping to ward off the belly laugh that was at this very second forming in his own gut. "Your uncle had an incredible imagination," he remarked.

"Yes, he always had some sort of illness going," Mary Anne admitted. "He became terribly depressed after that, sure he was going to explode any day, and went around warning everybody that cats were a menace to themselves and society, and because of the proliferation of cats here and in Europe, he said there would be a hairball plague in two years that would totally wipe out Western civilization."

"Not if the killer bees from South America get here first," mused the doctor. His patient stared at him dumbly, and he sighed. Obviously a little well-placed levity wasn't going to ease the doldrums of Mary Anne Lafferty. "Well, seriously," he coughed, shifting in his chair, "Uncle Windham sounds like a harmless though terribly eccentric hypochondriac, but surely not committable on those grounds."

"It was Mrs. Radowsky's cat from across the hall that made him crack completely," Mary Anne explained. "Attila ran into his apartment one day while he was carrying groceries."

"Attila's the cat," Dr. Sheridan guessed, smirking triumphantly as Mary Anne nodded, a slight look of annoyance on her face, no doubt at his slow comprehension of the entire situation.

"Uncle Windham started screaming then and hurled a jar of wheat germ at him," she continued. "Hit him square in the head and caused extensive brain damage. Mrs. Radowsky called the police, who found him whimpering, and picking up stray cat hairs from the floor." She stopped abruptly. "Uncle Windham, that is."

"Right," said Dr. Sheridan, finally able to follow her thought processes.

"Poor Attila," said Mary Anne sadly. "He's mentally retarded now, but Mrs. Radowsky feeds him off a spoon and cleans his messes. He's become incontinent too."

"I'm not surprised," murmured Dr. Sheridan. "Tell me, is this the real reason you came to see me? Are you afraid you'll end up like Uncle Windham?"

"Oh, no," Mary Anne said quickly. "I LOVE cats and I miss Felicity terribly and feel responsible for causing her death, although it was Darryl who actually killed her."

Dr. Sheridan pursed his lips, trying to remember. "Yes, of course. Darryl, your brother. Does he have a hairball phobia too?"

"OF COURSE NOT!" cried Mary Anne, her left eye beginning to twitch.

Impossible Dream

My room is neat and clean
I dust it every day
I have a drawer just for my socks
And never a one is stray.

Yes, I have a whole flock of socks
All mated into pairs
A flirt of skirts, a dance of pants
A herd of underwears.

My mother says that I'm obsessed
My mother is no fool
My room is very neat and clean
It follows all the rules.

—Christine Evans, age 13
Glen Hills Middle School
Glendale, Wisconsin

"He didn't actually kill her in cold blood. It was sort of—involuntary catslaughter. Naturally, if he had gotten that promotion to assistant manager instead of getting fired, none of this would have happened."

"Naturally," agreed Dr. Sheridan amiably. His mid-morning craving was beginning to gnaw at his stomach, but unlike other days, he found it not to be so severe as to break his concentration, all of which he needed to follow the plot line of Mary Anne Lafferty. "Why did Darryl get fired instead of promoted?"

Mary Anne sighed, her long face in innocent bewilderment. "Since our parents died, I've been very close to Darryl, although I never really did understand him," she admitted, brushing at her left eye. "He's been at the supermarket for six years, learning all phases of the business. He's very intelligent even though he is a little weird. So when he was passed over for a twenty-six-year-old who had been there only eight months, he, well—" Mary

Anne faltered, twisting her hands again, "took revenge."

Dr. Sheridan turned up the tape recorder. "How?"

"He stole two hundred cans of tuna fish," she said sheepishly, "but just the kind packed in water."

"He IS intelligent," the doctor nodded, strumming his mustache excitedly. "But why tuna fish? Why not salmon or shrimp? God, I love shrimp," he said impulsively. "Why didn't he just raid the meat section?"

"He planned to," Mary Anne replied softly, "if he didn't get caught with the tuna fish."

"I see. Interesting *modus operandi*."

A knock at the door brought in the receptionist without a word from the psychiatrist. She backed into the room, a tray in her hands that held napkins, one steaming cup, two incredibly fresh chocolate eclairs and one carton of coffee milk. Dr. Sheridan beamed his approval, his smile as

always carrying untold gratitude to his loyal employee. "Thank you, Kate."

"Don't forget your medication," she said sternly, and with a quick nod at Mary Anne, strode out to the reception area.

Dr. Sheridan chuckled as he reached into his desk, extracting a bottle of pills. "Ulcer," he explained, opening the milk carton. "I eat breakfast at seven, so I get pretty hungry around this time." He bolted down his medication with a tall swig of milk.

Mary Anne gazed at him in wonder. He extended his hand, proffering the coffee and eclair. "This one's for you," he said, taking a bite of his own succulent pastry. "The bakery around the corner makes them, and Kate, bless her heart, although she has one too, goes out rain or shine every morning. I also get one for my ten o'clock patient."

"Oh, I couldn't eat with you—I mean it's not professional," she declared, watching the tiny globs of cream coagulate in his mustache.

"And who's to say what's professional?" Dr. Sheridan shrugged philosophically. "No one knows what goes on behind these doors except Kate, and she's out there right now slobbering one down herself. So, please indulge. You look like you need to gain a few pounds anyway."

Mary Anne blushed and looked at the eclair. "Well, maybe just a bite," she agreed. "I don't eat much. I also have a nervous stomach."

"Yes, don't we all," smiled the doctor, smacking his lips in satisfaction. "Now, let's see, we were discussing Darryl's theft of the tuna fish."

Mary Anne nodded, taking a sip of coffee to wash down the 'bite' of eclair. "The manager was furious and called the police. Poor Darryl was so distressed at getting caught, the manager decided to drop the charges, but gave him his walking papers. And that's when I gave him Felicity, to help him get over his depression until he found another job."

Dr. Sheridan nodded. "I take it he's still unemployed?"

Mary Anne bobbed her head, unable to talk because of a mouth full of eclair. "Delicious," she mumbled.

"Just how did Felicity die?" he asked when she finished chewing. The nervous intensity etched on her face only minutes before had somehow changed to one of tranquillity. For some reason chocolate

eclairs seemed to have that effect on people.

She patted her lips with the napkin and placed it neatly on the tray. "I didn't mean to be such a hog," she apologized.

Dr. Sheridan laughed, thinking he hadn't enjoyed a patient this much since Malcolm Hennessey, the super-talented tenor who could sing only in the buff, and had been busted for his rendition of *Ave Maria* in St. Aquinas' Roman Catholic Church on a quiet Sunday afternoon.

Mary Anne sighed deeply, crossing her legs in a relaxed fashion. "My little Felicity died of food poisoning," she said solemnly. "Darryl had made up a huge batch of tuna salad with lots of mayonnaise and seasonings and forgot to put it back in the fridge when he went for an interview. It was one of those hot days last month when it reached 98°. Of course, he didn't get the job, and stopped by the library practically in tears."

"Library?"

She nodded. "I'm a librarian. Well, I

felt sorry for Darryl that night, so I took him out to dinner where we both got sort of happy on stingers. After three hours he was feeling much better and invited me up for a nightcap, and that's when we found her—dead on the floor." Mary Anne stared morosely at the doctor. "The apartment was stifling, and the tuna fish bowl lay broken and empty near Felicity, with bits of celery and splashed mayonnaise all over the place. It was horrible," she recalled painfully.

"And what did you do?"

"I became hysterical, screaming at Darryl. All he could say was, 'Oh, my God!' over and over. After I calmed down, I picked Felicity up, put her tongue back in her mouth and carried her in a towel to the car until I could take her to the vet for cremation. I told Darryl I never wanted to see him again, that he was stupid and irresponsible and must be my stepbrother who belonged in the padded room next to Uncle Windham."



Illustration by Marianne Mitchell

The doctor whistled softly. "That was a little harsh, wasn't it?"

Mary Anne sucked her lip. "Roger said that too, but he's such a klutzy wimp himself," she confessed, dropping her eyes.

"And Roger is?"

"Well, he's sort of my boy friend," Mary Anne said hesitantly. She laughed shortly, fidgeting in her chair. "Would you possibly have a ladies' room here? Every time I have coffee—"

"Yes, of course," said Dr. Sheridan. "Right outside. Kate will direct you." He sat back in his chair, chuckling to himself. "Miss Lafferty, you are most refreshing," he said when she was gone. He rummaged in his desk for a tape of Malcolm Hennessey. The day was shaping up nicely, he thought. After this session, with no further appointments until three, he would listen to one of three tapes he had made of his former patient. Bizarre sessions they had been, with big, burly Malcolm unashamedly disrobing to perform opera selections from *I Pagliacci* to *Porgy and Bess*, while he, Sheridan, unashamedly reveled in the magnificent performances. True, the first aria had been too distracting, too ludicrous to enjoy, but on turning his back to the wall and closing his eyes, he could envision himself at perhaps La Scala, listening to an accomplished performer the likes of Caruso or Pavarotti.

Malcolm's condition remained a mystery. Numerous physical and psychological tests had proved he was as normal as the next guy, only profoundly more talented, in a strange sort of way. Reluctantly, he had released Malcolm with the half-hearted suggestion he look for an agent who specialized in booking concerts for the blind. Malcolm, although less than enthusiastic over the idea, was deeply grateful for the free sessions given to him in exchange for his permitting the doctor to tape the naked virtuoso in his office.

When Mary Anne returned, she had resumed the forlorn look of a lost child. The fleeting pleasure of the palate was now forgotten, and once again she sat rigid, stretching her skirt forward in the name of modesty. The psychiatrist studied her thoughtfully. He had never treated a librarian before, and wondered if working in an environment where speech above a whisper was taboo might also be detrimental to one's mental health. Perhaps Mary Anne had been secluded in the quiet sanctuary a bit too long.

"Feel better?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes. I don't understand why everybody else's liquids seem to take the back roads to the kidneys, and mine take the freeway."

Dr. Sheridan nodded knowingly. "My dog Mole has the same problem."

"Mole?" she giggled.

"He was born with this big brown spot on his belly," the psychiatrist explained, spreading his hands. "It saved me the trouble of thinking up a name for the big slob."

Mary Anne nodded uncertainly.

"Now, tell me about Roger," he said, "the klutzy wimp boy friend?"

"Roger," she repeated, shrugging slightly. "He's just Roger. I met him two years ago in the library. He loves Shakespeare and the classics like I do. And he loves my poems. I write poetry, you know," she said, blushing. "Well, we sort of got together. At first I was thrilled—just having a guy, but Roger is—" she hesitated, "self-centered, immature, terribly boring, and—" she stopped and swallowed.

"And?"

"He makes love like an unmade bed," she admitted, lowering her head.

Dr. Sheridan turned the volume hard to the right. "You're lovers?"

"Sort of," she whispered.

"Mary Anne, either you are or—"

"We were," she corrected. "Not now. I just can't stand him—it—any more. He's so *GAUCHE*! I mean he slobbers, hyperventilates and wheezes! And he's afraid of *EVERYTHING*! He's lived his entire life vicariously in books. He has no original sense of excitement or adventure."

"But what about sex? You just said you both—"

"By the book," she nodded. "He had an instruction manual the first time. He never experienced *THAT* either. It was very awkward."

"Surely you—"

"No," she confessed, her left eye starting up again. "I just never had boy friends. Maybe that's why we were attracted to each other. I know I'm ugly and too tall. That's why I hang onto Roger. He's really okay in his own way. I've just never known anyone so dull."

Dr. Sheridan frowned. "Don't you still enjoy discussing literature together, your poetry?"

Mary Anne shook her head. "The fact is I've outgrown him, Dr. Sheridan. I was

all set to break up with him completely when this thing happened with Darryl and poor little Felicity."

"Couldn't you talk about it with Roger?"

"I tried," she said bitterly. "All he could say was cats were dirty little creatures anyway, and that I was callous and inhuman with Darryl and loved Felicity more than him—Darryl, that is. I told him that wasn't true, otherwise I never would have given him Felicity in the first place. But Roger dismissed that. He's hated Felicity since the day she scratched his face and made it bleed. He can't stand blood, especially his own, and when he saw the tiny mark on his face, he went into the bathroom and threw up. Then he threatened to throw Felicity out the window. I guess I should have mentioned he's vain too."

Dr. Sheridan scratched his chest involuntarily. All this talk of cats had begun to activate his allergy. Unlike dogs, the mere contact with the feline persuasion made him itch intensely. He sought to change the subject. "Tell me, Mary Anne, what kind of changes would you like to make in your life? What are some of your fantasies and desires?"

She gave a long, audible sigh. "I'd like Darryl to find a good job. Of course, I wish Felicity were still alive."

"Come on, Mary Anne, what do *YOU* want?" the doctor demanded ferociously.

Mary Anne bristled. "What I want is to have a best friend who I can talk to!" she shot back. "What I want is to be beautiful! What I want is to go trekking in the mountains of Tibet and cruise down the Sepic River. In case you don't know, Doctor, that's in Papua, New Guinea."

Dr. Sheridan raised an eyebrow. There was certainly more depth to this creature than he'd realized. "Then why don't you?" he goaded.

"How can I?" she said. "I have responsibilities. My job. I have no one to go with. It's very expensive."

He started to laugh. "Now look who's dull and boring." He thought she might get up and strike him. But almost instantly her face changed from rage to a tiny smile.

"I know what you're doing. I was a psychology major before I changed to library science. Okay," she nodded, "maybe I'm timid too. Most single women are concerned about travelling alone. And besides, I've used up all my vacation for

this year. I'm also very busy trying to finish my book of poetry."

"You've published your work?" he asked, surprised.

"Oh, yes, for eight years now," she said happily. "I know poetry isn't popular, but one of my editors encouraged me to submit a book length to his small publishing house."

"That's wonderful," he congratulated her, reasoning that if the rudiments of Shakespeare and especially poetry had eluded him throughout his academic and professional life, how could he expect to understand this complex patient who was charming, a literary intellect and offbeat as hell. He sat forward, studying the woman in earnest. "I'm not really sure why you came here today, Mary Anne, because other than your nervousness and obvious insecurities, you seem pretty well-adjusted to me. And I do agree that you need a good friend in whom you can confide."

"Good friends are hard to come by," she said softly. "Roger was filling the void of both boy friend and girl friend."

He nodded. "I'd like to give you a little advice, and I hope you won't be offended," he said, scratching his mustache.

Mary Anne watched the last tiny glob of yellow cream disappear. "No, please tell me what you think," she said eagerly.

"All right, as I see it, Roger is a crutch you no longer need. Dump him," he said seriously. "Felicity is dead. You buried her, now replace her."

"Cremated," Mary Anne corrected.

"Yes, cremated," he remarked. "Finish your book," he continued, "and then take your trip. There are dozens of companies conducting group tours, some exclusively for singles. In any case, it'll give you an opportunity to meet a great many people. Together you'll share new experiences. Experiences not vicariously lived," he smiled. "And you'll gain confidence in yourself. Once you have that, you'll feel like you were freed from bondage."

Her face brightened. "Do you really think I can do it?"

"I really *KNOW* you can do it," he chuckled. "Now, I will concede that Roger was partially right about Darryl."

"I should make up with him," she said.

"Yes, he's your brother and needs your love and support. Right now he needs to lean on you until he gets another job, until he has regained *HIS* confidence. Then you must back off and let him take charge

No Matter What I Do

Sometimes in the heart of the old,
There is only foolish fire,
But I am not so old
That I cannot dance, nor so old
That I cannot love, tho
No matter what I do
God will have my guts for garters.

—Louis Phillips
New York, New York

again. You're both adults and responsible for your own lives, Mary Anne. You have to know what your priorities are and deal with them accordingly. You are not neurotic, you know, just perceptive in realizing that you *ARE* mixed up, with feelings of inadequacies about yourself and confused about the unorthodox behavior of your relatives. You're in a rut and need to develop a positive attitude. You can get that attitude by changing your outlook, and to an extent your life-style, but especially by *DOING*. It would appear you have an open road before you. I suggest you go forward, Miss Lafferty, and meet the challenge."

Mary Anne sat motionless, feeling a strange tingling throughout her body. "I know you're right. I guess I just needed somebody to tell me that."

Dr. Sheridan smiled. "And lastly, about your appearance," he said hesitantly, wondering how he could so boldly give advice to this woman when here he sat—bald, fifty and fat around the middle. A daily pigout on eclairs did not come without a price. "Why not try using make-up," he said kindly. "You could certainly use some color, Mary Anne, but I would recommend you consult a beautician who can advise you on the best shades and colors. And while you have very beautiful, long hair, a professional cut and shaping would undoubtedly enhance your features."

"You really think so?" she asked, trying to absorb a total remaking of herself.

Honey, even Stevie Wonder would think so. He cleared his throat. "Absolutely," he said.

She beamed at him. "Thank you," she said. "I've thought about getting another cat, but didn't want to hurt Felicity's feelings. But it's *MY* feelings I have to think

about now. I fully intend to do everything you say. In fact, I feel better already." She got up and shook his hand. "Do I pay your receptionist?"

He stood up, too, and laughed. "This one is on me, my dear. I have enjoyed this session tremendously. Put the money to good use."

Her mouth fell open. "Dr. Sheridan, you are truly wonderful!" she exclaimed. "I will write you a very special poem."

"I'd love it. But not too deep or heavy on symbolism. It's all beyond my comprehension," he grinned.

"I'll remember," she grinned back. "The first thing I'm going to do is stop at the bakery next door and buy a dozen chocolate eclairs. And I will think of you when I eat them." Impulsively she bent across the desk and kissed him on the cheek. Before he could recover, she had slipped out the door, closing it softly behind her.

Dr. Sheridan chuckled to himself as he plucked the tape of Mary Anne from the recorder and replaced it with one of Malcolm Hennessey's. "Kate," he called into the intercom, "since the rest of the morning's free, I'm going to the opera." He depressed the play button and propped his feet up on the desk, sighing contentedly as Malcolm's Pagliacci filled the room. He stroked his mustache absently, thanking the powers above for patients like this and the incredible woman whom he had just dismissed. For after the opera, and before more somber business again intervened, he would enjoy a leisurely lunch and a lovely hour of laughter with the very lovely Mary Anne Lafferty.

N. DeMello lives in Swansea, Massachusetts.

I AM BEAUTIFUL

By

Kathleen A. Natiello

I am beautiful. I know, because I tell myself this every day. It's not too difficult to believe it either. I simply avoid mirrors whenever possible, keep my nose out of fashion magazines, and turn off the television.

My daughters are another matter. They are not so easily turned off. They follow behind, flipping the television back on. My youngest, fifteen, calls me to the set. "Look, Mom! My favorite commercial." I pause in my daily dinner routine to watch two boys hiding behind a wood fence. Several feet away is a Pepsi machine. Out of a car steps a beautiful brunette, wearing tight cut-offs and a low-slung tank top. She buys herself a Pepsi, turns unknowingly toward the boys and takes a long, sensuous drink. "Wow!" says one boy in awe. The commentator describes Pepsi's new can design. "It's beautiful," says the second boy.

"Isn't she beautiful?" my daughter asks. I am forced to agree. Perhaps she is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. It's too bad, I think, that we can't all look just like her. "That's Cindy Crawford," my daughter explains. "She's married to Richard Gere."

"Who?" I ask, not really caring. I begin drifting toward the doorway to check dinner.

"You know Richard Gere!" she exclaims. Jumping up, she follows me into the kitchen. "He's the one who marries Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*."

"Hmmm," I reply as I scrub up several potatoes. Of course I know Richard Gere. I do, after all, live in the twentieth century. *Pretty Woman* played repeatedly on our VCR the first week it came out on video.

"All mom knows is how to cook," says my oldest, just coming in from God-knows-

where. Outside, her car is still running, the one I recently helped her purchase. "When will it be ready? I'm starved."

"Dinner?" I ask.

"Of course, dinner. Aren't you listening? You never pay attention."

"Sorry. I'm too busy making dinner. Maybe if you'd help, I'd be able to listen better."

"Now, don't go getting an attitude, Mom. You know you're the only one around here who knows how to cook."

"You're eighteen! Don't you think it's time you learned, too?" I pause in my peeling, mid-potato, to glance at my oldest, a blonde-haired vixen who poses prettily in the doorway.

"Mom doesn't know who Richard Gere is." My youngest doesn't want to be outdone. Laughing, she tosses her long brown tresses in an alluring manner. My stomach sinks. This year, slowly but surely, she has joined her sister's ranks. Now, she is a fully-blossomed teen-ager.

"You're kidding? That's the man I'm going to marry."

I look at my oldest doubtfully. "He's taken. And you won't be marrying anyone, or at least not for long, if you don't learn to do something besides your hair."

"Mom, you're living in the dark ages. I'm going to marry a millionaire, and he's going to do all the cooking." She thumps her chest for emphasis.

"Good luck," I reply with a smirk.

"Listen, I have to run over to Janie's for a while. I'll be back in time for dinner. What're we having?"

"Chicken."

"Chicken? I swear, that's all you know how to make."

"It's what we can afford."

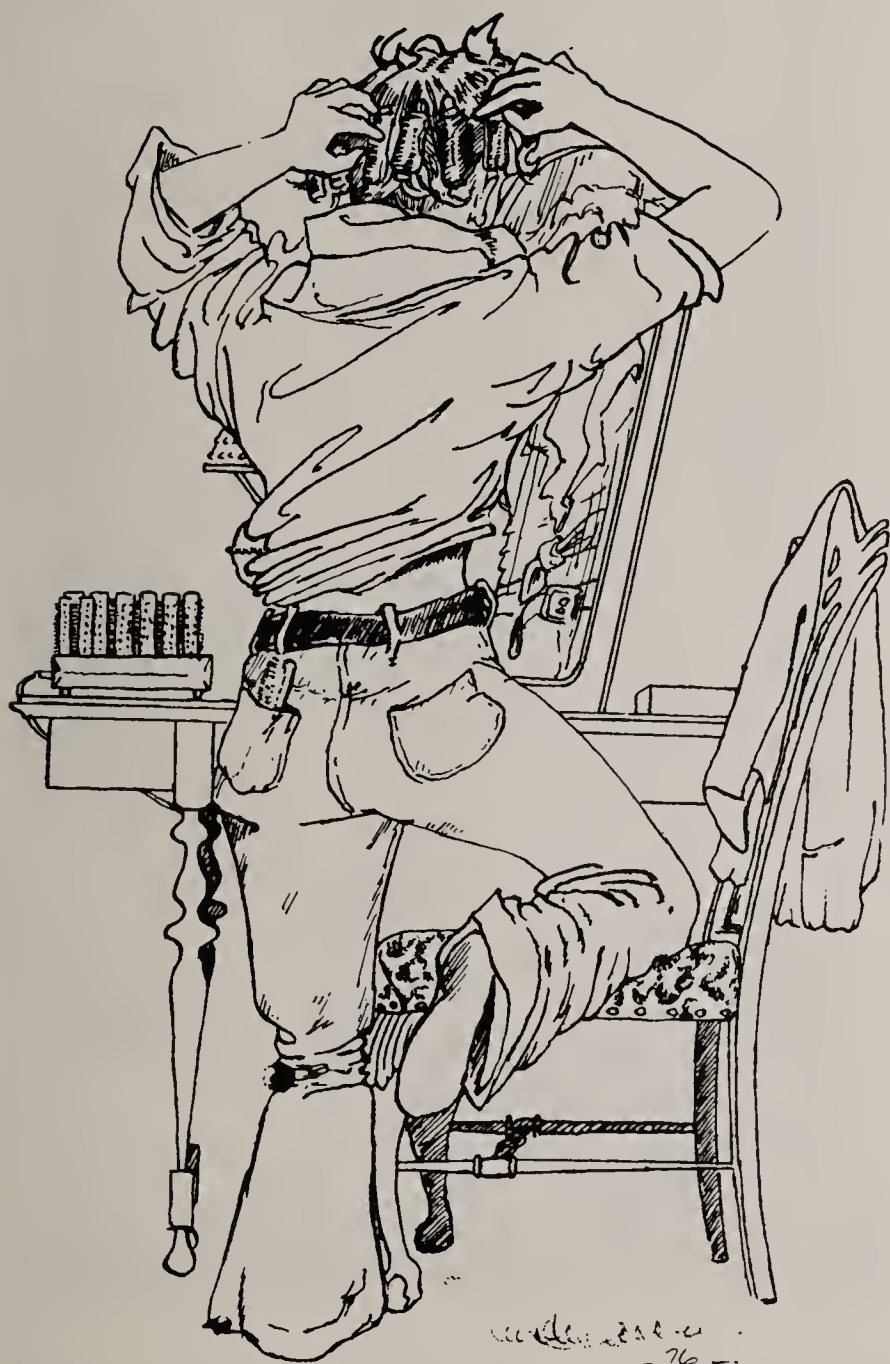
"That's why I'm going to marry a mil-

lionaire. I'm sick of being poor." She dances mindlessly out the door, while the younger one goes off to her room to blast her stereo and do homework. At any moment, the phone will ring. One of the future millionaires calling to beg for attention.

Thinking once again of *Pretty Woman*, I laugh to myself. In my day it was Walt Disney's *Cinderella*. The story, still popular, is another video in our household's collection. I know now that a fairy tale is just a story that lacks a final chapter. If complete, *Cinderella* would read more like Princess Di and her Prince Charles: "Beautiful young lady of lower classes marries handsome prince, finding life in the palace hardly a ball." Such is life, never what we think, but always a lot of work.

Today's young ladies, though, are convinced that real life is what they see on television. They admire, perhaps even worship, the beautiful people. Their goal is to be just like any one of them. A set of braces, a better wardrobe, is all that is needed to take them to the top. The throngs of women that line the streets—housewives and mothers who also share in the earning of today's incomes—are outdated. "I," as stated by both of my daughters, "will never be like them." Instead of *Cinderella*, who marries the prince and lives happily ever after, I see them as the two lazy step-sisters. But they are not lazy, they are only young and overly influenced by a false prophet.

I can't help thinking that if Rubens were in style today, society might change its outlook toward middle-aged women. I'm not referring to business women who have done something outstanding, nor to the Linda Evanses of the world who have passed middle age and miraculously have



remained untouched by time, but rather to those sturdy, average women who are the cement of our society. These are the women that I perceive as truly beautiful, these quiet undertakers of life's work load who secretly aspire to keep the peace.

"Supper's ready, you guys!" I call, setting the chicken down on the table. The chicken is skinless, lower in fat and better for you. It's covered with spices and onions, baked, and then quick-broiled to perfection. I have learned a hundred tricks

for making chicken better than ordinary. My husband wolfs down his food without comment. "Take a little more," I tell my youngest. "You're getting too skinny. You're going to make yourself sick with all this dieting."

"I'm not dieting any more," she answers, with only a leg, a salad, and a piece of bread for her meal. "But I don't want to gain back what I've lost. You should try to lose weight too, Mom. Really. If you lost, you'd look just like the mother on *Growing*

Pains."

"You would," agrees my oldest, breezing in. Sitting down, she piles food onto her plate. "I'm glad I don't have to worry about my weight. I'm starved. I'm never going to be overweight," she goes on, wrapping her teeth around a piece of chicken. "God, can't we have something good tomorrow, like pepper steak, for a change? You make the best pepper steak in the world, Mom. So what are you doing, going on a diet?"

"No," I say. "I think I'm just going to get old." Bending, I dig into my own plateful.

"I'm never going to get old like you. When I get old, I'm going to look like Janie's mother. She's beautiful."

"Beauty," I remind myself, "is in the eye of the beholder." Just as age has changed my concept of the world, so too, will it change my daughters' outlooks.

"I think your mother looks just fine," my husband says, staring at my daughters. Then he glances down at his empty plate, wipes his mouth and sighs. "I love chicken, and it was great, as always."

"I am beautiful. I am beautiful," I repeat to myself in a chant. The room is empty. Again, I am alone. They have each returned to their separate interests. As I begin to clean up, I wonder if my daughter can be right, that no matter how elaborate the disguise, chicken will always be chicken.

"But, look what they've done with turkey," I remind myself. "Turkey hot dogs, turkey baloney. . . ."

K. Natiello lives in Griffith, Indiana.

Something

Something, something's in the air,
 We can't see it but it's there,
 Something's after you and me,
 Something lethal, something awful,
 Something sneaky and unlawful,
 In the lakes and in the ground,
 In the forest—all around,
 In the vegetables and trees,
 In the fish and in the seas,
 Something—I but speculate
 Probably particulate,
 Then again could be a stew—
 Acid rain and poisoned dew,
 Hydrocarbons and a few,
 Bits and pieces of asbestos,
 Something, something will molest us,
 Something, something's everywhere,
 We can't see it but it's there,
 Something, something's in the air.

—June Shipley
Highland, Indiana

Murphy's Law

The cashews
 were cold
 and you insisted
 on watching
 “The Day of the Triffids”
 but the video store
 was robbed
 and so we agreed
 to go to the opera
 though you hated Boris
 with a Russian passion,
 kids knocked out
 the shrubbery
 and our cook
 at the Italian was out sick
 perhaps I should meditate today,
 but on whom.

—B. Z. Niditch
Brookline, Massachusetts



Gouache and collage by Judith Rice

Middle Age

I've embarked on middle age
 And the consequences look dire
 Not only is my waist expanding
 It's also creeping higher
 With these changes to my middle
 That I scrutinize so raptly
 I really do think middle age
 Has been designated aptly

—Evelyn Ronco
Munster, Indiana

EYE TO EYE

By
Shirley Jo Moritz

After the nurse had bathed and dressed me, I continued to sit in my bed. In deep concentration, I balanced the right contact lens on my left index finger. Slowly and carefully, I aimed the lens toward my pupil. Since the brain surgery had left my entire right side paralyzed, I was doing what I had overheard my neurosurgeon suggest to my husband—"Get her back to normal as quickly as possible."

My nurse for the day, Anna, was bustling in and out of my room, doing her morning tasks. Noticing what I was doing, she paused to say, "It amazes me how you can put a contact into your eye. Especially since we're taught from children never to stick things in your eyes."

"You really have to dislike wearing glasses. And I do!" I said.

"I guess you do. How long have you worn them?"

"Nineteen years. Since I was thirty." I was so happy that my brain surgery hadn't affected my long-range memory. But to tell the truth, that morning I was so disoriented that I couldn't have told anyone the date.

"Nineteen years is a long time!" Anna said, gathering up the dirty bedclothes. "But if I ever need glasses, I think I'll opt to wear them."

"Oops! I think I just lost one," I said, peering into my eye-sized mirror. My bare pupil stared back at me.

Abruptly, the nurse stopped her activity and gazed at me. "Did you see where it fell?" she asked.

"No, I didn't."

She emptied her arms of the sheets onto

the foot of my bed, bent down and began to scan the floor. "Describe the contact to me."

"It fits on the colored part of the eye."

After a short time, she said, "I don't see it. Wait a minute. I'll be right back." She hurried from the room.

I chuckled to myself. As if I could go anywhere without help!

Soon, the nurse returned, the cleaning lady by her side. "This is Christine," Anna introduced her to me. "She's going to help us. She's worn contacts. She knows what to look for; I don't."

"Is your lens clear or tinted?" Christine asked.

"Tinted."

"What color?"

"Pale blue."

"Were you sitting there when it dropped?"

"Yes, but I don't know where it went," I answered, feeling helpless.

She squatted and began to skim the floor about the bed. "Anna, did you see it fall?"

Joining Christine's search, their heads nearly touching, Anna said, "No, and I can't imagine where it could have gone."

I wanted to be down there on the floor with them. Many times over the years I had peered through tears of frustration to find a lost lens on the edge of a drawer, in the crack of a baseboard, among my shoelaces, or where it had bounced to the other side of the room. I had become very proficient in my searches. Now I began to search the front of my gown and the bedspread, but to no avail.

Suddenly, Christine stood up and said,

"Let me see your eye. Are you sure you dropped the lens?"

"Yes," I answered, tilting my head toward the ceiling, bugging my eyes and pointing with my left hand to my right eye. "But I didn't see it fall."

Peering into my eye, she said to Anna, "She's right. It's not in there." Back to the floor she went.

A movement at the entrance of my room caught my attention. An intern had stepped inside the door. I followed his gaze. With his hands on his hips and a smile on his face, he was watching the wiggling bottoms of the two women. Anna and Christine were so engrossed in their hunt and their conversation with each other that they hadn't noticed the intern. Amused at the scene, I chuckled, and he disappeared.

At last, Christine stood and said, "Let me look into your other eye." Cupping my face between her hands, "Oh, my gosh!" she exclaimed. "They're both in the same eye!"

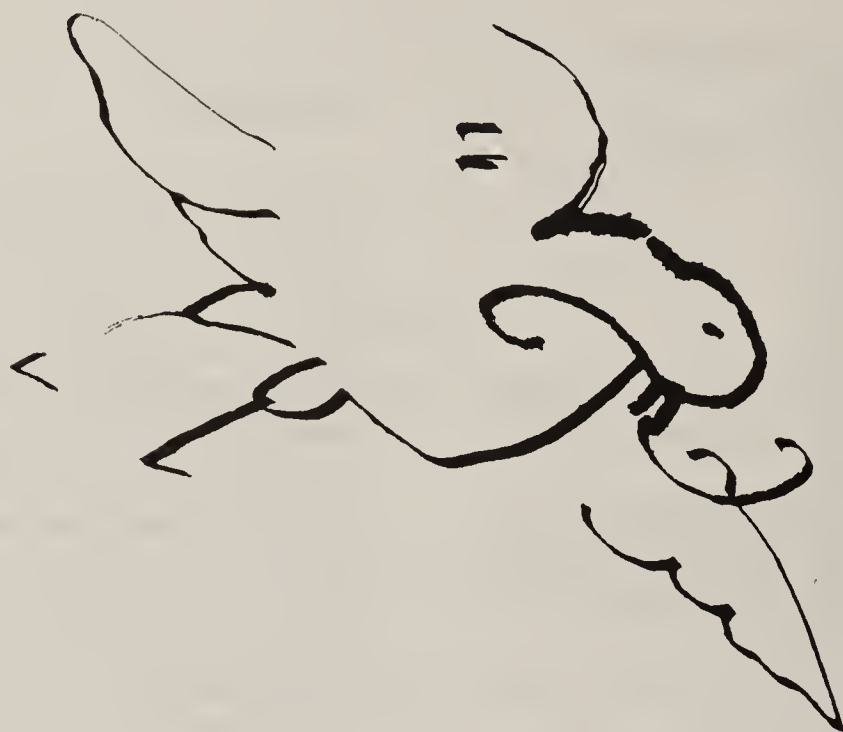
Anna jumped up to see, and I could contain my feelings no longer. "You've got to be kidding," I said.

"No," she said, "it's the truth! You've got two lenses in one eye!" And she began to laugh. Soon, the nurse and I joined her.

When at last we became more or less composed, Christine helped me blink out the two contacts, separate them and insert them properly. As she departed, she said, "Now, you don't try that again, unless you call me. Okay, you ding-a-ling?"

I nodded, but I put my contact lens in correctly the next day and the next and the next—by myself!

S. Moritz lives in Merrillville, Indiana.



Writing a Poem

When he left I decided to write a poem.
First, I had a cup of coffee, then I sorted
words, looked at them carefully, counted
them the way I count sheep when I can't
sleep—I count one, two, three, seven, ten. . .
the higher I count the more awake I am
so I turn on the light, read until two
or three o'clock, then try to sleep
but those damn sheep keep jumping until five
or six AM and I get up at seven exhausted
and grouchy.

Anyway, I sorted words, counted words,
arranged words in nice patterns on the paper,
decided to have another cup of coffee,
sat and watched a couple of near-sighted
robins search for worms on the front lawn,
wrote down a few more nice sounding words
like senescence and lugubrious, got out
the dictionary to see what they meant, decided
I couldn't use them, answered the phone twice
(one was a wrong number), ate a piece of coffee
cake while feeling quite senescent, almost
lugubrious and just before he came home
I wrote a poem:

A feather here, a feather there,
Before you know it the bird is bare.
Not much, I know, but I tried.

—June Shipley
Highland, Indiana

Opening Lines

“Oh, if only you
Were the night sky,
And I,
An evening of fireworks.”

“Oh, if only you
Were the North Star,
And I,
A ship in the night.”

You will never know,
How many poems
You have inspired,

And I have written
On scraps of paper
And stuffed into my pockets.

Only to be found,
After
I have washed my jeans!

—Christopher Mauch
Crown Point, Indiana

Poet's Complaint

Several were stolen, taken
as they sat day-dreaming
on the front steps, ragged,
hungry, yawning. Recently,
I saw one in a door on
a street far from mine.
It wore expensive clothes,
its manners were polished.
It's thriving as it never
had before.

Some were erased, pushed
to the side, the back,
the bottom. Inadvertently,
of course. Swept out, by
accident, or left in taxis.

But *then* I send one forth
that *could* become a President
or movie star or millionaire,
that *does* achieve publication—
and is thereby buried alive.

—Joan Peternel
Chevy Chase, Maryland

ERIC

By
Richard Crews

I met Eric on the Fourth-Avenue bus going downtown. He got on about Thirteenth Street. As he dropped three quarters in the coin machine, the door hissed closed behind him and the bus accelerated slowly away from the curb, the driver leaning way to his left to look back at traffic and passing the huge steering wheel in his lap hand-over-hand, first counter-clockwise, then back clockwise.

"How much?" Eric asked innocently. He had already deposited seventy-five cents.

"Sixty-five cents," the driver responded.

"I gave it seventy-five." He was speaking in an unnecessarily loud voice.

"It don't make change."

"What does it do with the extra?"

The bus driver finally looked around at the young man. "I can't give you change."

"You mean my dime?"

"Yeah, that's right. Step back behind the line, buddy."

"So you get to keep my dime?"

"I guess you could look at it that way."

"Do a lot of people give you dimes that way?"

"Some. It happens. Look, take a seat, will you, buddy? You're not supposed to talk to the driver except for directions or something."

"How am I going to find out about the dimes?" He looked around, appealing with an innocent look to the dozen or so people

riding the bus. Most of them were ignoring him the way bus riders are supposed to—are trained to. You learn that as part of learning to live in a city.

I had looked up from my book and was watching with amusement. I was sitting only two rows back from the front. Our eyes met.

"He could be keeping hundreds of extra dimes every day," he said to me in an even louder voice.

"Look, buddy, I don't keep the dimes." The driver was getting annoyed.

"But you said. . ." Eric was looking at me. He winked. I winked back. He abandoned his attack on the driver and swung two steps up the aisle to take the seat next to me.

"My name's Eric." He was about my age—mid-twenties—and blond, like me.

"I'm Amanda."

"You sure? You look more like a woman-da."

"Do you do this constantly?"

"Can't afford it. Not the way they steal your dimes."

"No, I mean. . ." I stopped in mid-sentence and laughed. He had gotten me again. I vowed to be very careful while talking to him.

"You reading that book?"

"No, I'm holding it in my lap."

"Very good!" He laughed.

"Truce?"

"OK, or consequences!"

We both laughed.

"Where are you going, Amanda?"

I started to answer, then paused.

"How do you mean that? Cosmically? Biologically?"

"Geographically."

"OK, just checking. I'm going to the aquarium. Where are you going?"

"Why, I'm going to the aquarium, too!"

"Oh, really?" I responded with enthusiasm. Then I checked myself. "Where, by the way, were you planning to go before you found out I was going to the



*Illustration by Michelle Chang,
Age 8, University School,
Bloomington, Indiana*

aquarium?"

"My brother's apartment on Fourth Street."

"There, see? You can do it. You gave me a perfectly straight answer—I think."

Eric smiled. "You called a truce."

"How long is a truce good for?"

"Hard to say."

"I was afraid of that."

The bus was stopping at the aquarium on Tenth Street. I stood up and pushed past his knees into the aisle.

"It was nice talking to you," I offered.

"Is this our stop?" Evidently he was really coming with me. He followed me to the front of the bus and off onto the sidewalk. At the bottom of the bus steps he turned back to the driver.

"What if someone only has fifty-five cents? And you've got all those extra dimes? A starving person, maybe. . ."

The door hissed shut. I hooked my hand on his arm just above his elbow and steered him toward the front entrance of the Roosevelt Hall of Aquatic Sciences. After a few steps, Eric paused and then took an extra-long step forward. He was gazing at the ground with furrowed brow.

"I wonder who decides where they put the line."

"What line?" I asked warily.

He paused and giant-stepped again, gazing back at the spot he had stepped over.

"On the bus—who decides?"

"Oh, right. Very crucial question." I paused when he paused and hopped over the next imaginary line with him.

"The important question is at what level is that decision made," he proposed.

"The mayor?" I suggested.

"Can't be."

We hopped another imaginary line.

"Why not?"

"Too many busses. He'd have to deputize someone else to decide on the lines for him."

"And what kind of responsible government would that be?" I lamented.

"Right."

We were at the ticket booth at the entrance to the aquarium.

"How many?" the lady in the booth intoned.

"How many does it take?" Eric inquired innocently.

"The lady in the booth looked up. 'Two?'"

"Better make it three," Eric replied, looking around as if to get my agreement.

The lady frowned. We were the only two possible customers in sight.

"Two?" she corrected.

Sensing trouble, I stepped past Eric up to the window.

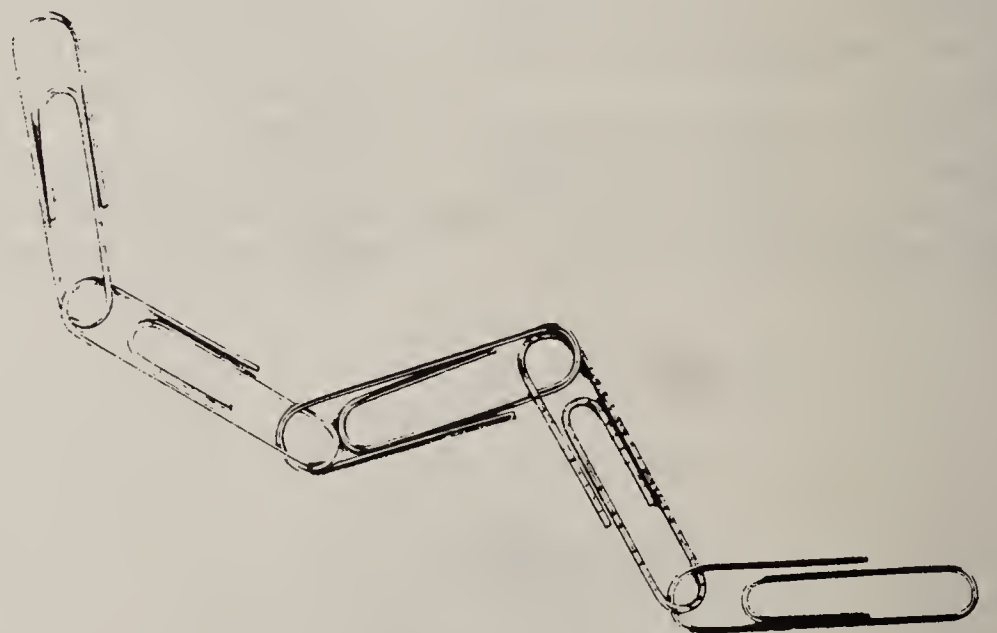
"Two," I confirmed.

I gave her two ones, and received the tickets. I turned, took Eric's arm again, and we started through the door. I felt him start to slip his arm out of my hand to turn back toward the ticket window. I tightened my grip. He looked at me, smiled, and went along quietly.

"OK, I'll bite. Why did you ask for three?"

"You mean was it intuition or just a lucky guess?"

"Was what?"



"How I knew you'd want two tickets. But I didn't know she'd let me in free."

"You're really impossible." I laughed appreciatively.

"No, not impossible. Just highly improbable."

We both laughed.

"So are you, by the way," he offered.

"Thanks!" I squeezed his arm. Then I realized I'd been had again—probably. My mind reached back desperately into the conversation for a clue as to what trap I was walking into.

Eric laughed. "It's OK. Don't tense up. Just a little light conversation here."

"Yeah, sure," I said suspiciously. But I was smiling. It occurred to me that I couldn't remember ever having so much fun with someone—and doing absolutely

nothing: riding a city bus, walking on a sidewalk. Every word, every movement counted, so to speak. I was alive, vibrant, in a way I had never felt before. I was hanging on every word, every sound—watching every tiny corner and movement in the world around me with peaked interest—my whole mind focused and buzzing with attentive curiosity as to what the next ludicrous game would be. I couldn't believe the way I was feeling. It occurred to me that I had never really been in love—though I had thought I was.

"Earth to Amanda—come in, Amanda." Eric interrupted my thoughts.

"What?" I was taken aback.

"You were out there somewhere."

"Yes, I guess I was." After a pause, "Eric, do people get pissed off at you sometimes?"

"Well, that's a strange question."

"No. 'What happens to the dimes?'"

That was a strange question. And "Who decides where the lines go?" and "How many tickets does it take?" Those are strange questions."

Eric interrupted. "What about you? Do people get pissed off at you sometimes?"

"Well, yeah, sure, sometimes."

"At everybody, right? So I'd say if you already know the answer, it's a strange question. You should try asking questions you don't know the answer to. That's the whole point of a question. If you already. . ."

"OK, OK. I see what you mean."

We had gotten to the gift shop and cafeteria. The huge fish tanks and other scientific exhibits lay ahead.

I realized I was hungry. I hadn't eaten all day.

"What do you say we get something to eat?" I suggested. "I'm starved."

"No," Eric replied blandly, "I'm here to see the fish. You go ahead, though, if you want something to eat." But he turned into the cafeteria without resisting.

The place was almost empty. We took a table. In a moment the waitress cruised up, deposited two glasses of water in front of us, and perched back against the adjacent table with her pencil poised over her open order pad.

"Yeah?" she proclaimed.

"Do you have a menu?" I inquired.

She and Eric gestured simultaneously to the wall over the grill. He seemed to have known in advance exactly the gesture she would make.

"How about a nice seafood platter," Eric suggested.

"We don't have any seafood," the waitress offered.

"How come? This is an aquarium, isn't it?"

"Yeah, but that's why. People don't eat fish here."

"I suppose so. I never thought about it."

"And suppose it was a big salmon—going for six or eight dollars a pound at the deli?"

"Look. There's no fish. You want to order something?"

"They don't have any fish, Amanda. Why did we come here?"

"You call when you want to order." The waitress was ready to leave.

"I want to order—I want to order," I interrupted. "I'll have some soup—do you have soup?"

"Clam chowder and split pea," Eric and the waitress said simultaneously. That's what was written on the wall menu, but it was uncanny, the sense he had of other people's pace, mood, and rhythm—even someone he'd met only a minute earlier.

"We'll have two bowls of clam chowder, please." I thought that was a safe bet.

Eric chimed in, "Are those clams the land kind..." but I had reached across and gently put my finger on his lips. The waitress hurried off, glad to escape. I saw her say something with animated gestures to the cook. Then she sat down on a stool at the end of the counter and lit a cigarette.

"You make people uncomfortable," I said to Eric.

"Do I make you uncomfortable?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"I'm sorry."

"No, you're not. Not really. At least I'm not!" We both smiled. I put my hand on

no pause. It was like being in the fun house at a carnival. Something was always popping up. Something surprising. Even scary. He made a person feel constantly off balance. I was sure I couldn't stand a steady diet of him. Maybe an hour or two now and then.

"What do you want to know?"

"Well, who are you? Where do you live? What do you do for a living? Do you have a family—besides a brother on Fourth Street?"

"What do you think I do? Guess."

"Oh, let's see. I think you write children's stories..." I stopped short. "No, I don't want to guess, Eric. I want to know things about you. I want something to stand on. You're a wonderfully exciting person, Eric. I've never felt so alive in my life as this past—not even an hour—I've spent with you. It feels like I've known you—I don't know—a long time. But you scare me, too. I keep thinking you're laughing at me or making fun of me."

"Oh no, Amanda! Don't think that. I'm the foolish one—the ridiculous one. I'm the person who can't get along with anybody. You can see that. It's a miracle that we met the way we did—that we hit it off." There were tears in his eyes.

"Why don't you ease up sometimes? Why don't you just go unconscious like the rest of us?"

"I can't, Amanda. I've tried. It's just the way I'm built, I guess. I can't live a normal life. I'm not even supposed to be out. I just slipped out of the lunch line—made it out with a delivery man. They've missed me by now. They'll take me back."

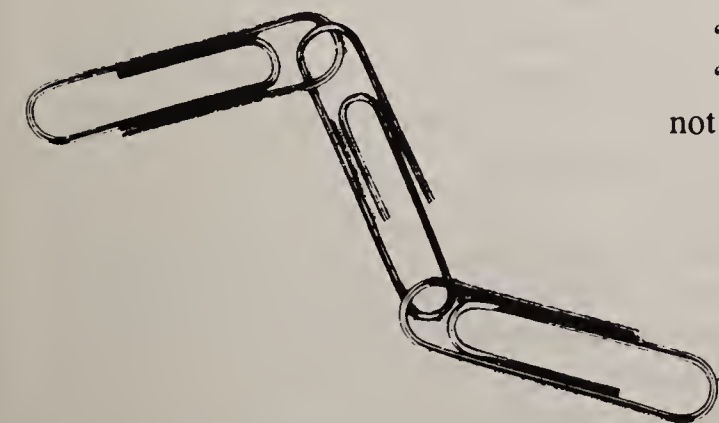
"What? Where?"

"Longview Psychiatric Hospital. I've been there for ten years."

I was shocked—my mouth must have been hanging open—I stared at him in disbelief. Then I realized with a jolt that I'd been had again. Or had I? My mind was in a whirl.

Eric looked at me sympathetically. He slid his hand out from under mine, and with a nod he gestured for me to look over at the door. A uniformed policeman had just come in followed by two young men in white hospital coats. They were talking to the cook. He was gesturing toward our table.

R. Crews lives in Mill Valley, California.



"It would probably hurt their little feelings, right?"

"What? The fish's feelings? They don't know."

"But if they found out?" Eric was inquiring with that same seductive innocence I had seen him use before. The waitress was walking right into some trap.

"No, it's just we don't want to kill them."

"What if they died naturally?"

"The fish?"

"Yeah. Don't the fish die sometimes?"

top of his, resting on the table.

"Tell me something about yourself. Something straight." I really wanted to get to know him. At least, part of me did. But it was true, part of me felt awfully uncomfortable. He gave a person no rest,



My Son, The Artist

In my house, where rules His Nibs,
There's always a shortage of baby bibs.
And every time he needs refueling
Just bet a dime there'll be some drooling.

For he lives not so much from hand to mouth
As from mouth to hand and to all points south,
Until the clothes of my little fellow
Are a riot of browns and greens and yellow.

(And the more the feeding is done in haste,
The wilder the expression of his artistic taste.)
For the spinach which doesn't agree with his taste
Ends up as circles of green round his waist.

While the carrots for which he displays quite a zest
Are an orange badge of honor he wears on his chest.
Each item of food varies in his affection
And each is dispatched in a different direction.

—Harold Von Horn

Gibraltar

I'm conversing with a Barbary ape,
my tourist glaze
in the same frame
as its frenetic chattering face.
I smile.
He grins.
Gale clicks the camera
and this cozy cross-species tete-a-tete
is plucked from the air
by the greedy hand
of ordinary household science.
It's one of those moments
that I can't help feeling
doesn't really happen
unless you can take it home with you,
glossy, sharp-colored,
six by four,
slipped into an album,
confined to minor history.
And the ape understands it too,
his clowning honed
to the camera's eye,
his rough hand gripping mine tightly
as if we are both on a journey
to some moment
that won't happen
until Gale and I are home.

—John Grey
Providence, Rhode Island

Illustration by

English Lesson for '93

Two Poems

To a Water, Foul

What heavenly plan, what destiny,
Brought you to me with the decree
That we forever should together be,
Oh, Water, Foul?

What awful crew brewed witches' stew,
And from the entrails then withdrew
A portent linking me and you,
Oh, Water, Foul?

What angry Jove did heavens move
As if his mighty powers to prove,
And joined us like a hand and glove,
Oh, Water, Foul?

What fallen saint on pleasure bent
A sin he never could repent
Committed, when to me he sent
A Water, Foul?

There is no plan, let chaos reign!
Some stupid fool with half a brain
Has blended you with gas octane!
Thus—Water, Foul!!

Note: This poem was written about the bad-tasting drinking water which was delivered to a replacement depot in the Philippines during WWII. The truck in which it arrived had been repainted, but showing through the paint was the label, Aviation gasoline 100 octane.

—Harold Von Horn

I

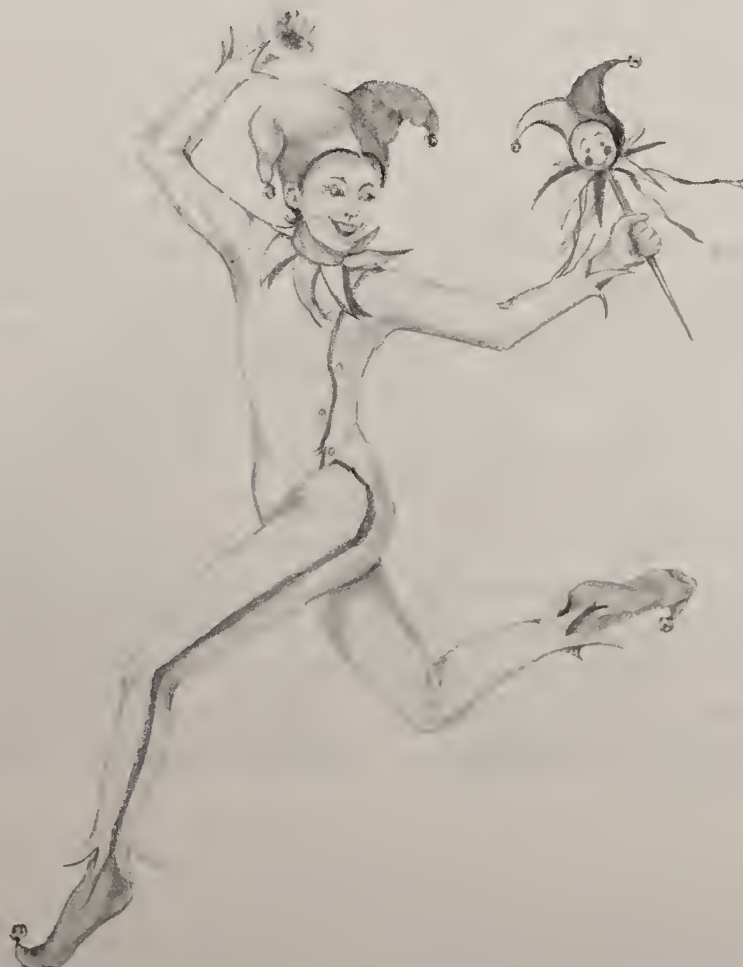
“Simply put” is never put that simply. . . .
The one who speaks goes on ad infinitum,
until the putting isn't simply put at all.

II

How we love the words that issue from our mouths.
This one makes a statement, and adds,
“Having said that,” as if he were headed
for some grand conclusion, when in fact,
he only likes to mouth the phrase,
“Having said that,” thinking it boasts
of higher education, and excellent semantics.

Having said that,
I am done!

—Helen May-Wing
Hammond, Indiana



THE GHOST AND I

by
Virginia A. Deweese

It's one o'clock in the morning and I'm sitting at my new table in the kitchen of my new (to me) home. Actually, the house is well over a hundred and sixty years old. My third cup of coffee sits before me as I contemplate the house and my situation. You see, I'm forty-two years old, never been married and, of course, never had children. I've got a set of saddlebags a Pony Express rider would have been proud of, and I am also the not-so-proud-and-happy owner of a ghost. Yep, that's what I said—a ghost.

It took me three days to get all my furnishings moved into the house. It also took me exactly three days to figure out that there was a presence in my new home that I could not see but one which was letting me know clearly that it was there.

The first inkling I had that anything was different about the house came when I kept hearing the stairs creak. That's not unusual in old homes, but it is not usual for them to creak in sequence as though someone were walking up them. When it finally penetrated my already over-taxed brain what I was actually hearing, I thought I was only overtired or having hallucinations from all the work, physical and mental, that I'd been doing for weeks preparing for the move.

Later, after a good night's sleep and a friend's offhanded remark, I started thinking that there just might be something to the ghost thing after all. There certainly wasn't anyone else living in the house with me—at least not anyone I could see. However, I was taught from early childhood that there are no such things as ghosts—

they are much like the monster under the bed or the one in the closet that will get you when you go to bed.

A couple of days later, while I was taking a shower, I closed my eyes and stood directly under the spray. The water sluiced over my body, relaxing tired and sore muscles. Enjoying the soothing flow of the water, I stayed that way for several minutes. Then the strange sensation of being watched came over me, and I jerked back out of the spray and rubbed the water from my eyes. For just a second I saw something like an impression in the water of a person's body, but no one was there. As quickly as it registered, whatever I had seen, or thought I had seen, was gone. So was the feeling that I was being watched.

That night I said an extra prayer to whatever God protects innocents like me, asking him to assure me that what I had seen in the shower had been only a hallucination brought on by an exhausted mind.

Well, mamma always said my prayers never got further than the ceiling. I guess she knew what she was talking about because during the night I had a visitor.

I dozed off around eleven-thirty while reading. About two o'clock I was wide awake; my heart was beating so fast it sounded like tom-toms sending messages to the natives. I was no longer alone, if you can call being with someone you can't see, hear, or feel, no longer alone. The bedside lamp was still burning steadily, and the book was lying on my chest. Suddenly, the edge of the mattress right beside my thigh seemed to dip down, the sheet which I had pulled up to my waist grew taut over my legs, and an impression formed in the mattress. Yes, sir, someone was sitting on the bed! I could even see the imprint of his butt in the gaily-flowered sheet. I decided I needed an outlet for my tension and I screamed, loudly and long. It didn't help me much, but whatever had been sitting



beside me must have taken exception to the noise because the impression disappeared.

Ah, I thought, it can hear me. I can talk to this. . .this. . .uh. . .apparition, and just maybe he will toddle off to someone else's house and scare them in their shower or while they're sleeping.

Of course, that would have been too easy. I talked for the rest of the night and nearly the entire next day, but he wasn't listening, even though I was certain he was hovering within my reach. And, yes, I decided the ghost was definitely a male—obstinate, overbearing and, to top that, a voyeur.

This was certainly not a scenario from *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*. The Captain was better-mannered and had a sense of humor. I wasn't exactly chuckling with glee over the situation with my ghost.

The next morning, a little before seven o'clock, I answered the doorbell to find Lance Hopenstatter on my front porch. At one time, Lance and I had been considered a hot item at Howard & Howard, the accounting firm where we had both worked, but after living with him for three years, I realized I could do better. At what or with whom I wasn't sure, but I felt that *any* relationship had to be better than the one Lance and I were in.

For one thing, Lance doesn't resemble his first name—he should have been named George or Humphrey or something like that. He is about as intriguing and sexy as my fourteen-year-old house slippers—balding, flat, listless, limpid. You get the idea. Six months ago, I told him that I was tired of being his drudge, and kicked him out of my apartment. Good thing I had the sense not to let him get his hands on my money. The only way I accomplished that was by telling him I was sending it to the home where my terminally-ill mother re-

sided. How was he to know my mother had died twenty years ago? Mother would forgive me for that lie, I'm sure.

Well, it seems that Lance got wind of my windfall (mother died and left me enough money to buy this house, new furniture, etc.). I could almost see the dollar signs registering in his nerdy, accountant mind as he invited himself in for a cup of coffee.

After being awakened from a deep sleep, I was really surprised that I could see, much less think that morning as I poured lover boy a cup of coffee. There had to be a way to dissuade him and get him out of my life for good. That was when I saw the sugar bowl dance across the counter as though it had been pushed by an invisible hand. I mentally rubbed my hands in glee, and thanked the saints for my ghostly roommate.

As Lance and I discussed the latest audit of the company's books, I slipped in

a remark about queer things happening to me since I'd moved in. It was like an avalanche—Lance was on a roll as he asked question after question about the house. Of course, what he really wanted to know was how much I had paid for it and how much money I had left. He looked soulfully into my eyes and held my hand over the table top, patting it. I could almost see the drool rolling from the corner of his mouth.

“Oh, well, babycakes, whatever is going on, you know your sweetie Lance will take care of it for you.”

Yes, once upon a time before the excretion hit the fan, we had several “gushy” names for each other. I wondered at times if Lance remembered that my name was Audra or if he called me “dumplings,” “sugar lump,” and “babycakes” to cover up the fact he'd forgotten. I looked him right in his green, crossed eyes and said, “I don't think you can help me with this,



Illustrations by Cal Barber



Illustration by Cal Barber



Lance, unless you know any ghostbusters.”

It took another ten minutes for me to clarify the situation. Yes, there was a ghost in my house, and, yes, I was sure. Lance shook his head. “Honey lumps, there are no ghosts. Just vivid imaginations.” Just as he finished the sentence, a stiff breeze blew up in the kitchen and headed for Lance. It swirled around and around, up and down, and under and over. When it subsided, Lance’s pens, which he carries in a pen protector in his shirt pocket, had sprung leaks, his shirt was out of his pants, his belt was undone and halfway off, and the few hairs that he diligently combed and sprayed over his balding spot were standing straight up. He was not amused.

“What was that?”

I just looked at him.

“Well, we’ll see about this. No namby-pamby ghost will get the better of Lance Hopenstatter, by darn.” He smoothed down his hair, tucked in his shirt, rebuckled his belt, and began to stalk through the rooms one by one, hunting for the ghost. On the

way out of the kitchen, he picked up a long butcher knife and hefted it in his right hand.

“Lance, don’t you think that a knife is a little drastic? You can’t cut a ghost. And if you could they don’t bleed.”

“Just let me handle this,” he said, affronted that I would question him.

“Have it your way,” I said, pouring myself another cup of coffee and sitting back down at the table. This was going to be too good to miss.

It was easy tracking Lance through the house—I could hear him opening and shutting closet doors as his footsteps resounded through the big, old rooms. Also, he was screaming at the ghost to come out and fight like a man. Lance wouldn’t know subtlety if it bit him on the ear.

Suddenly, I *knew* that the ghost was sitting beside me. I could almost hear him laughing as Lance stumbled and crashed through the house, yelling at an enemy he couldn’t see or hear.

It felt right and good to be sharing

laughter with the ghostly presence. I knew I had nothing to fear from him and, in fact, there would be times when he would be my protector. I also knew that there would be times he would make me want to call in a priest for an exorcism.

Lance’s head popped around the door jamb. “What are you laughing at?” he asked indignantly. His face was red, and sweat was dripping from his brow.

“You wouldn’t understand, Lance.”

“One thing’s for sure, I haven’t ever understood you!” He straightened to his full five-feet-six inches and marched through the kitchen towards the front door. “You and your ghost deserve each other.”

“Now, that is a nice thought,” I said out loud to the entity which I knew was still sitting beside me. “But if you’re going to stay here, we are going to have to set some ground rules. First of all, no more peeking when I’m in the shower or changing clothes. No more hiding things so I can’t find them like you did with the milk I bought for my cereal yesterday. And you can’t. . .”

* * *

It’s been three weeks since the ghost and I had our little talk in the kitchen. I might as well have saved my breath. He still interrupts my shower and peeks when I’m dressing or undressing, as the case may be, but we’ve fallen into a semi-routine and are dealing with each other rather well.

Lance doesn’t even speak to me at the office. In fact, one of the other workers told me he’s been telling everyone that I’m crazy and should be locked up. All I do when I see him is mouth the word “ghost” and he blanches white as snow and takes off at a swift walk.

There’s only one little mystery still to be cleared up. What happened to the butcher knife Lance was brandishing when he went hunting for the ghost? I can’t find it, and neither Lance nor my ghostly roommate are talking to me. Well, I’m sure it’ll show up one day—I’m just not certain where.

V. Deweese lives in Hammond, Indiana.

The Love Letter

I love you!
I love you, too.

We play roulette
With the toilet paper,
Leaving fewer and fewer sheets
To catch the other,
Paperless.
The *coup de grace*
Delivered
By the word
“Gotcha!”
Scrawled
On the
Tube.

I love you!
I love you, too.

I empty her
Toothpaste
Refilling it with
Rancid mayonnaise:
She uses it
In my egg salad.

I love your smile,
I love you, too.

I give her
Picture to perverts
Admonishing them not to
Think badly of her
In the morning;
She actually leaves
My underwear on the floor.

Words are not necessary.

—Robert Friedman
Larchmont, New York

Acropolis

Ancient Greeks lend me
stateliness as I
proceed toiling up
to the Acropolis,
my Sears and Roebuck
Grecian sandals stepping
in the hot dust,
my drip-dry dress
draping gracefully around
my classic thighs.

Past the Nike temple teaching
delicate strength, past
the maidens of the Erechtheum,
my sisters in head-strongness,
I breathe deeply.
Then, the Parthenon,
its columns themselves
a source of sun, an eternal
glow that flows into me—
gods, am I great!

—Dona Lu Goldman
Highland, Indiana

Getting Risky at Dusk

I predict the oak.
The wren warbles from the maple
so I have to remove another sock.
Just as things are getting
interesting in the half-light,
we notice the wren's house swaying.
Luckily, a firefly
glows up from the grass.
Will it be closer to us
or the tiger lily next? you ask,
fingers hooked in my jeans.

—David Henson
Peoria, Illinois



*Illustrations by Marques Burnett,
Age 9, Kenwood School,
Hammond, Indiana*

COMMA SPLICE

by
Kevin A. Kent

Tom Randall sat in the classroom, his head lying on his folded arms crossed on the desk. He was tired. He had never gotten used to 8:00 a.m. classes. In fact, he tried to avoid them—10:00 a.m. classes were usually where he drew the line. But this semester he had to take grammar. He was a composition major, so there was no getting out of it. And as luck, karma, fate, or whatever would have it, the only grammar course offered this semester was at 8:00 a.m. and was taught by Professor Stanley Starkowski.

Starkowski was a professor he had avoided for as long as he could. Everyone had told him that Starkowski was rough and even unreasonable at times. But all Starkowski's former students did agree on

one thing—if you lasted through the course, you would know your grammar backwards and forwards.

So reluctantly, Tom threw himself into the work load that Starkowski outlined at the beginning of the course. He stayed up late nights huddled under the halo of his reading lamp pouring over the lengthy reading assignments. He wrote and re-wrote and rewrote and even re-rewrote (if there were such a word) the papers. And finally, he made sure he was flawlessly prepared for every class. Starkowski's infamous pop quizzes were the true meat of the course, the baptism of fire, and Tom made sure he was ready for anything.

Tom noticed that not all the students had responded with the determination he had. There had been fifteen students at the

beginning of the semester; four dropped when they read the syllabus and found out how class was to be conducted. Bit by bit and week by week, Starkowski with his unorthodox methods had weeded the field of students, and now only six remained.

Pam Faxton was one of those six, and she was the type of student Tom classified as a zealot. If Starkowski asked a question, her hand shot up so fast you could hear the elbow click into place. For every time Tom had rewritten his papers, Pam had rewritten hers three. And if Pam chirped up with just one more of her amusing little anecdotes about how what they were talking about in class discussion applied to her life, Tom believed he would throw up.

Dana Myers was a different story—a quiet, brown-haired girl who always had

the answer when called on, but never spoke otherwise. Dana would make it through, he was sure.

Joe Dent he wasn't so sure about. Joe was an acquaintance—not really a friend, but just someone he spoke with from time to time. Joe was an English major who, up until now, had gone by the motto, “If the going gets tough, drop the class.” Unfortunately, now that he was a senior, he needed certain classes to graduate. Grammar was one of those classes, so he couldn't afford to drop. But Tom was almost sure Joe wasn't going to make it; he was too high-strung during the quizzes. Once Tom had suggested to Joe that he drop the class and make it up over the summer, but Joe wanted to graduate in May and wouldn't listen.

The other two students, Brent and Melissa, just blended into the woodwork as far as he was concerned. Maybe they'd make it; maybe they wouldn't. Either way, it didn't matter to him.

He heard the shuffle of Starkowski's footsteps and lifted his head.

“Good morning,” Starkowski said in a marginal greeting tone, looking over the top of his glasses.

“Good morning,” Pam piped, sitting up straight in her chair. Even her pony tail lay straight down her back.

Starkowski popped open the battered black leather brief case he always had with him and produced a small stack of papers. “Today, class,” he said as a smile crossed his thin lips, “we're going to have a quiz.”

Tom heard Joe mutter, “Shit.”

Starkowski moved from desk to desk licking his thumb, pulling a paper from the stack and handing it face down to each student. Pam resounded with a bouncy

“thank you” upon receiving hers.

Starkowski hobbled back to the front and pulled a gleaming, silver stop watch out of his vest pocket. He cleared his throat and said, “Turn your papers over.”

Tom did. Before him was a set of twenty-five sentences.

Starkowski continued, “Each of these sentences has an error in it. I will call on you, and you will have twenty seconds to identify it.” He pointed a crooked finger. “Now don't try to work ahead because I'm going to call names and sentence numbers at random. One last thing,” he paused and looked at each one of them individually, “this quiz is under battle conditions.”

Tom shifted in his chair. Battle conditions made the quiz important, do or die.

Starkowski strolled back and forth across the front of the room. “Pam,” he said with an abruptness that made everyone jump, “what is wrong with sentence thirteen?” Starkowski's thumb pressed the stop watch, which emitted a disconcerting *tic, tic, tic, tic*.

Tom looked at number thirteen.

“When the boy got home he ate a sandwich.”

Simple, he thought. A comma should go after the introductory adverbial clause.

“There should be a comma after *home*,” Pam said.

“Correct,” Starkowski said, resetting the watch.

Pam smiled triumphantly.

Starkowski glanced around the room.

Tom met Starkowski's gaze. He had discovered that a lot of teachers wouldn't call on you if you did that. They were more likely to call on the students who stared down at their desks hoping to avoid notice.

“Joe,” Starkowski called, “what's wrong with sentence twenty-one?” He started the stop watch. *Tic, tic, tic, tic*.

Joe shifted in his seat and rubbed his hand back through his hair.

Tic, tic, tic, tic, tic.

Tom looked at the sentence.

“The girl got out of bed, then she took a shower.”

Come on Joe, Tom thought. It's a comma splice. It was in the reading for today.

Tic, tic, tic, tic, tic.

Joe said, “Um. . .uh. . .” alternately glancing at Starkowski and the paper.

“Well, Joe,” Starkowski now stood in front of Joe.

Tic, tic, tic, tic, tic, tic.

“Time's up,” Starkowski yelled.

Joe spoke quickly, “I'm sorry, sir. Can't you give me another one? I'll get it. I swear.”

“Sorry,” Starkowski said smiling, “battle conditions.” His hand went inside his suit jacket and pulled out a hand gun. He swung it toward Joe and squeezed the trigger. The gun recoiled with a roar. The bullet blasted through Joe, and blood splattered on the back wall. The force of the shot picked Joe up and sent him reeling over the desk directly behind him.

Starkowski, still holding the smoking gun, turned to Tom. “What *is* wrong with number twenty-one, Tom?”

“Comma splice,” Tom said calmly.

“Correct,” Starkowski said, replacing the gun in its holster.

Tom knew Joe should have dropped the class.

K. Kent lives in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.



Photo collage by Mary Smith Chant



Food Stuffs (Food for Thought)

by
Robert Whittaker

The Cockroach. Repudiated for centuries. Regarded with scorn as the worst pestilential infestation the world has ever known. Nowhere on the planet are you free from some species of Roach. Its ability to digest anything and survive on almost nothing for long periods, combined with the ability to function without its brain, make it the perfect pest. The mighty tank-like Roach is nearly indestructible, and able to withstand thirty times earth-normal gravity, while man can withstand only seven times the same force. The Roach is or becomes resistant to poisons that are designed to lessen its numbers. In fact, the impervious little Cockroach can survive a nuclear blast at ground zero.

These pesky little nuisances have a good side. Though it is true that the dirty Roach is known to spread disease, it is equally true that it is composed mainly of protein and can be eaten. I can feel you cringe with disgust. Under normal circumstances I would tend to agree that it is a repulsive idea.

Some cultures regard the Roach as a delicacy and eat the larger varieties on a regular basis. Of course, in the event of an atomic war, the Roach will be the only viable source of protein left. Well, I suppose you could eat your fellow human beings but to me this seems worse than eating a bug.

Therefore, when man has reduced himself to a cancerous sub-humanoid who has to eke out an existence from the rubble of a once green planet, he may well find himself picking through the broken remains of his civilization for an insect. He will be hunting for his salvation—his age-old nemesis—the Cockroach.

I suggest we plan ahead by instituting the Roach into our diet somehow. Instead of soy, we could use the mighty Roach. Also, he should be part of our emergency survival kits as a last line of defense against hunger, and a supplement to the canned and dehydrated foods. We should have glass cases installed in public buildings filled with Roaches bearing a caption reading "IN CASE OF DIRE EMERGENCY BREAK GLASS." I propose that these be installed next to the fire extinguishers we already have.

So remember—the next time you are about to step down or call the exterminator, you could be eliminating a possible future food source and dooming our race to extinction.

R. Whittaker lives in Griffith, Indiana.

CLASS NOTES

by
Richard Steingesser

1913

College Hall of Famer **Felix "Fez" Puffer III '13** celebrated his 100th birthday at the 80th Class Reunion and was the only one there. Asked by your correspondent what he thought of the world today, "Fez" replied, "I outlived all those asses," but then became enraged when **Lester Pyles '13** was wheeled in. Lester Pyles laughed and laughed and then "Fez" broke Lester's hip with a baseball bat, but then lost his balance and broke his own hip and pelvis. What excitement!

1914

Platt Webb '14, Missing In Action since the Battle of Verdun, has been found alive and well in a Hermitage wine cellar, in Lyon. Speaking little English and no French, "Platty" seems to believe he's an Animal Impersonator.

1915-1917

News here is very scarce. Almost everyone, of course, is dead. But **Burgess Farnsworth II '17** has bladder problems in a continuing-care facility.

1918

Gassed in World War I, **Ferris Farragut '18** is recovering nicely and reports he had his prostate removed for the third time at Boise Veterans' Hospital. **Henry Peet VI '18** proudly reports that he has now been unemployed for ninety-four years.

1919

Chester Farnsworth '19, Burgess Farnsworth's younger brother and president of his class, has now been officially and finally declared incompetent and insane. All those alive and still desiring to help rob his estate, contact your alumni correspondent.

THE 20'S

The roaring 20's! **Verne Putbrush Jr. '21** leaves Hortense Rool Putbrush (Vassar, '24), four children, and 19 grandchildren, and is now in Acapulco with a sixteen-year-old Louisiana Creole mud-wrestler. Hello! all you new readers! **Marty "Bonkers" Fine's '23** estate was worth one freight elevator (to Mt. Sinai Hospital), but with no doors. **Salvatore "Fats" Fang '25** has completed his sonnet on puberty and seeks a publisher. "Fats" also reports his third wife, Svetlana Popavac (Smith, '47), has finally finished drinking herself to death. Keep the news coming! **Sumner Horatio Silk '21** has lost his right eye and wants to know if other corridor alumni from Pecker House also get amazing amounts of green discharge from their noses. **Wilbur Warren IV '27**, past CEO of Boston Bank, is now a part-time Duck Farmer. **Mimi Dawn Gaganovich '24** continues to recline in her same sun-filled bedroom with skylight since being diagnosed with an incurable brain tumor in 1928. Reunion News! and Serendipity! **Harvey Pilcher '23** suddenly realized at his 70th Reunion that two of his dead children were actually **Monti Facey's '23**

dead children! Also at the reunion **Debra Blattfurt '25** and **Sara Weinblotz '25** announced they married after all these years! but they had come to the wrong reunion! **Dino Magliozzi '27** still shoots in the low 190's from the golden tee and has recently completed his third 70,000-mile Winnebago tour of New Jersey. Not to be outdone, **Daphna "Missy" Blythe Vlop '24** proudly reports that she has circumnavigated Mars and will surrender all her money to The College Observatory. Another heavy hitting College Benefactress, **Margo Rich '27**, is still alive and still a vegetable. Her unbreakable will calls for an absolutely state-of-the-art "College Cryogenic Facility with appurtenances" where she and several hundred of her black and white guinea pigs will be housed perpetually—but College legal eagles say we can "interpret loosely" and get a 65,000-capacity Domed Football Stadium! and stick Margo and her pigs in a broom closet with an ice cube tray.

THE 30'S

Correction: **Duncan Groom '31** claims he did not die in 1962, as was previously reported. With the help of estrogen supplements, **Samantha Mahoney Mulroney '38**, now 73, has given birth to her twenty-ninth child! this one with three hands. Frisky Sami! On a sadder note, the surviving West-Regional Class of 1933 attended their pre-60th reunion at the College Club in Bora Bora, and everybody died of food poisoning. **Raa Lafleur '32** reports that he has become a woman, and **Thelma Slosberg '32** reports on finding her inner child and Wild Woman but cannot find her house. It's so nice to see alumni finding themselves after all these years! **Penelope Stringer '37** is no longer a nun or an outreach librarian and now intends to become Charlton Heston. And ever wonder about **Lela Bertram '34???** After fifty years of intensive therapy, Lela has discovered with great sorrow she wasn't abused or raped as a child, but now believes herself a Blenheim dog called Moofa, who was raped by the wild pig. **Raymond Boggs II '38** has finally taken over the family bank in Boggsville, Indiana, which he fully intends to loot completely.

THE 40'S

Many retirees! **Roger Partridge '48** has sold "Roger's," a legendary gift-card shop in Atlanta, and is now living on the street. And **Hazel 'The Bod' Nobody '44** has retired as a dictaphone operator and intends to have a wart removed from her right foot. Proctologist **Napolean Splat '47**, remember him! will take up his life-long hobby full-time, an exact house-sized scale model of The Byrd Sub-Glacial Basin in Antarctica. And **Pastor John Poole '42** is stepping down from the First Episcopalian Church in Marblehead and will become a part-time Rabbi on the Island of Utara, Indonesia. Also, **Ira Fast '46** has sold his Lincoln-Mercury dealership in Tucson and will soon declare himself Jesus Christ and live in Jerusalem. Alumni are cruising and moving! The **Huggs, Crystal '43** and **Lyle '41**, plan to sell their ranch house in Brooklyn, New York, and buy a ranch house in Brooklyn, Kansas. **Mordechai Feld '45** is reportedly now a Mormon and is on a rowboat headed for the Magnetic North Pole. Other surprise moves! **Boynton Brathwaith XI** was abducted next to a Fotomat in Akron, Ohio. And **Calvin Dim '46** and his sixth loving wife, Letitia Quint (North Tulsa Community College '83), will take up dwarf tree growing in Rwanda Burundi. Urologist **Camilla Sprock '42** has sold her practice and is headed to the Gibson Desert in Western Australia, where she will become a part-time Frankfurter Inspector.

THE 50'S

Those fabulous fifties! **Irene "The Dream" Darling Droop '52** enjoys golf at The Country Club and although she's had some troubles, (radical mastectomy, hysterectomy, melonomic brain tumor), she continues to shop and wore a fabulous \$32,000 organza Chanel gown to the Alumni Somalia Charity Ball, and donated several Campbell Soup coupons. Irene is having seventeen of her bedrooms painted pink and her sweet basil is in bloom! A word about space and favoritism: This correspondent treats all alumni, no matter their worth or standing or importance, absolutely and exactly the same. Embittered and poverty-stricken **Fred**

Nagel '52 is an unemployed Librettist. Congratulations to **Doris Vanderbilt Papes '51!!!** very wonderful Co-Chair of that 40th Reunion Tailgating Blast, who still lives in ol' Virginy where she still raises rhododendrons! News from "hot" **Sheila Titman Plotnik '54**, who writes, "I continue to be very active in church activities although I am Jewish and an atheist." **Ted "Cap" McLeod '53** sent us one of his "funniest moments" when his wife, Kalye Gardner (Sweet Briar '59), had a major stroke and choked to death swallowing her tongue. More movin' and cruising! The **Snodgrasses, Boyce '54** and **Ashley '55**, finally made their in-town move from Scarsdale to Manhattan, and were immediately murdered. And lovely **Tina "Lips" Platt, '54**, whom you will remember from the famous Circumnavigators Club, was crushed to death at a summer elephant training camp in Thailand. Happier News! **Norman Dupree '56**, CEO of Everglades National Park Oil and Gas, divorced his ugly third wife and went to dry out in frisky Finland, where he met and married an ugly Finnish woman. "Much excitement here!" writes **Darja Felbblurb '57**. "We visited Auschwitz in the rain!" Also travelling: **Newt Swiggles '51**, who got a touch of plague in Baluchistan, but has managed to complete his soused tour of the entire Great Wall of China riding an equally drunk diuretic yak. **Alden Dalwin '55**, chairman and CEO of Marietta Missiles, has finally dried out at Hazelton, where the College is opening another Club, and is thrilled to report "The Pecker Five" met in Las Vegas and sodomized a hat-check girl, although only two could perform properly. Thatta way! Keep the news coming!

THE 60'S

Such an exciting decade and so politically important! Periodontist **Lyle Ti Phelps Hoddick '68** writes, "My Southampton beach house is now worth 1.7 million!" Former Weatherman Portfolio Manager **Kal "Deek" Talmadge '69** is unimpressed, "My Nantucket beach house is now worth 3.4 million, not counting the extra lot." And former student activist, acid-head, and bomber, **Carlo Lynch '67** of the Lynch Group, tops everyone! "All real estate is worthless, we now own most of Alabama and are planning a

24-billion-dollar radioactive waste dump that will eliminate all life forms except the endangered screaming black marmot." With the admission to the bar of **Heather Moody Hood '66**, 92% of the "wild" '67 class are now lawyers! with only 8% CPA's and MBA's. Always happy, **Mortimer Bird '68** of Bird New Age Pesticides writes, "My corporate jet—ha! ha! ha!" Chief Psychiatrist in Charge of Special Softball at Creedmore, **Lance Bull '61**, reports this insight: "Each mental nut is pretty disgusting individually, but as a team, long-haul, they're worth more than a Van Gogh. . .that's something to think about—in fact, it's all I think about because of my four rotten, snot-assed kids and college and grad bills for an even million dollars." Keep pluggin', Lance! Big cruise reunion! The Radical '67's celebrated their 25th with a CRUISE TO NOWHERE with Miriam Freedman La Bastille lecturing on her blockbuster book, *Lesbian Stepmothers and The Female Goddess White Bat*. Also on hand to provide entertainment were Tom Jones and a singing life-size replica of Janis Joplin furnished by Chucky Cheese Enterprises.

THE 70'S

Kids are on everyone's mind! **Mark Bromwitzblatt '73** writes, "The kids—Hercules, Zoe, and now Prometheus—all get great grades in school, although my wife Rachel sometimes confuses the Ritalin doses and Prometheus doesn't move for a week." And from that Krapp Hall legend **Mike "Chops" Moots '74**, "Thank God our Buster ran away. I hope he's dead." Congratulations to the **Kloops, Penny '72** and **Barney '72** and their daughter Phillippa who has been accepted at Heidelberg to study 15th-century Westphalia barbershop quartets! And **Natalie "The Spark" Burg '76** writes from Cedarhurst, LI, "We just spent \$152,000 on Jay's great bar mitzvah with everyone getting into the theme and odd costumes of the Owamba Tribe in Namibia." On a sadder note: **Jill Job '79** drowned while island-hopping in Moose Lake. Beloved Jill was no ordinary person and was Assistant Treasurer of The Glee Club in 1976. She will be sorely missed at College Teas, which I too attended on romantic spring nights when the honey-

suckle wound its arms around flushed and panting roses shedding dewdrop tears while screaming in pleasurable pain to the bare, anguished, naked nipples of the moon. Jill Job, our beloved Jill, is dead! Reminder! The big pre-15th is arriving for the '78s at the HIV clinic in Harlem Hospital. What a marvelous idea! There are elevators for everyone.

THE 80'S

Those fast moving 80's! **Zaga Schwartz Poupalanian '83** is now a mother of three nursing infants, a security analyst at Goldman Sachs, and an ob/gyn intern at Downstate. In her spare time she square dances, pots, and climbs mountains over 20,000 feet high while studying forensic toxicology at Princeton. **Tom Glow '81** heads the Trust Fund at Hartford Mutual and bikes 2,000 miles to work each week from Manchester-By-The-Sea while learning seventeen languages on tapes, and recently, all major Galapagos Giant Turtle sounds. How productive! And **Yang Doo '83** and **Doo Yang '84** are voice-synthesizing upland gorilla commands for NEC computers in the Cameroons (in a software program called "Want Bananas") and have interfaced them with their revolutionary program for blind, emotionally-disturbed children that empowers these kids to read fluently in Latin with a Sanskrit keyboard while now also ordering bananas from fourteen supermarkets! Some, not all, of our high-powered graduates are experiencing temporary downswings in their amazing career plans: **Emile Botswick '82** from Aerospace Engineer with Boeing to part-time Zookeeper; **Wilfred Ingalls '84** was an Investment Banker and now is a Bonbon Dipper in confections; **Melisse "Sis" von Schloppe '83** was an Art Gallery Director and is now a Suppository-Molding Machine Operator; and **Mirfield "Bops" Kuck III '85** was an airline pilot and is now a half-time Parachute Folder with no benefits.

1991 Recent graduates who are not going to spend the rest of their lives in graduate school report some surprising success stories in the job market: Phi Beta Kappa **Tabitha Eskinder** is now an As-

paragus Sorter in California; **Wilfred "The King" Miles** is in Meat Products, and is a Toe Puller; **Brooke Bloodworth**, part of the "Fab Five" of Pecker Hall, is a sales rep for re-upholstered Baptist Church furniture; **Heidi "Hi" Dadmun** enjoys being an underemployed Restroom Attendant at the Parsippany (NJ) Hilton; **Alixanda Soren** is now a Mayonnaise Mixer II with Hellman's; while **Kimberly Owens** is also in foods and has become a senior Dole Banana Grader. Also reporting their successful post-college careers: **Vinnie Palumbo Jr.**, who cleans vertical Venetian blinds; **Jon "The Bomb" Dobs**, a Golf-Shoe Spike Assembler and part-time Monkey Breeder; **Lorraine "The Brain" Snow**, a Mortuary Beautician; and **Maura Astor**, an itinerant Cremator.

1992 Jobs continue to be a major problem facing recent graduates, but more good news! **Brooke "Babs" Channing** was a Burrito Maker III for Nabisco, although she, sadly, slit her throat when she was demoted to a Turkey-Roll Maker VI, but has recovered and is happy as a Sausage Stuffer I; **Wayne Filbert** from The Math Team is a Human Projectile in the Costa Rican Circus; **Schlomo Dutz** has found work as a Fur Plucker and also sells his blood and semen, and will gladly sell any of his vital organs for the right price, but unfortunately has no present address; **Hugh Eskinder** reports he is doing fine and is one of the four hundred finalists to become a Tub Attendant at the Chicago Hyatt; **Nonnie Phipps** assembles bird cages in her parents' home, and has actually sold one, and has a possible job offer in Mexico from Levi as a Shirt Folder III. And, lastly, **Vittoria Lingenbery** has become a whore in Kyoto, Japan, and makes \$9,000/week.

1993 Most graduates who have not committed suicide seem to be in Prague, trying to form a grunge band. But remember **Fred Fiddleman**? Fred from Charmer House? Fred has killed his mother, Mrs. Fiddleman (Madison High School, '53)! So, many thanks for the news and please keep in touch. It's been a gas, and have a Merry Christmas and a wonderful year!

R. Steingesser lives in Newton, Massachusetts.

Patricia Wilson, Editor

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Illustration by Pat Carnett

P O E T R Y

Kathleen McCarthy Kozuch,
Editor

Window on a Sanitarium's Spring

All weary winter long consumptives
pot nasturtiums in the greenhouse,
tendering blooms like pink tissue.
With lungs pumping like leaky bellows,
they rasp at angels in white poplin,
flicker like feeble moths to sepia

panes and, as Keats, they peer far
afield, watching and waiting for
green stalks to pierce winter's
thatch, a window opened on spring.
Wizened lungs draw their life after
bully winter blows out to prairie.

Larches fencing tombstones burst buds
fresh as a new lover's breath, what
the buried ghosts gave up for Lent.
Soon on night breezes quince blooms
so potent caped nurses shut the open
panes of breath for a poetic rest.

—Edward C. Lynskey
Warrenton, Virginia

Speaking Now, Before I Hold My Peace

I do not pretend to have learned anything, but
It is half of love not to mind
The inconsistencies of what the spirit reaches for
And how, of proper mode and kind.

I know better now what you never meant to mean:
You are a comet that passed me once, alone,
And I grieve to know it certain
I am not the sun your heart calls home.

But you have been to me the sudden light
That makes a question possible, some
Little wonder in the confusion of stars
And all they say of what is past, or passing, or to come.

It will be mine to hold my children to that broken black
And tell them honestly, *it is its nature to go*.
It is never ours to own, or even touch
But somehow over aching voids, to know.

—Adam Brooke Davis
Kirksville, Missouri

Kindling

Sometimes your words, as strange as Nordic runes,
were riddles I half understood, and yet
they seemed to play upon familiar tunes
of lovers. (Mine's a simple alphabet.)
Forward and backward, that was how I read
your signs, knowing each letter spelled a word
beside its sound. Frail dreams bemused my head:
old runes had powers of magic, so I've heard.
Traffic of ancients carved on birch or yew
made kindling or was left to rot and mold
but priests and chieftains and the noble few
wore runic spells on amulets of gold.

Yours you inscribed on air. No stone or bone
for talisman. No witch words to intone.

—Agnes Wathall Tatera
Chicago, Illinois

Photo by Pamela Hunter



Sunbather In Autumn

Somehow the summer did not penetrate
The screens of oil, the tilted umbrella—
In the hot days we are like steelworkers
In protective glasses working with fire.
Each day must be handled like an ingot,
The close, real touch of the thing is lost—
The worker is ready to be worked on;
He has a cool, empty mold inside him.

Now that it is finished with orchards, fields,
The sun acknowledges the waiting man,
The handler who wishes to be handled
At last in a natural relationship.
His chest that was a heat shield is a fan
Of muscles folded across a willing heart.
The moist genitals are heavy as fruit—
This is the cautious one from the hot shop.

It is curious but true that the love
Of a thing may be loveliest at the end.
The sun turns feminine, masculine, as the case may be:
The glasses are put down, the oil removed—
One is being looked for with the softest light.
In this case, a man will guide the warm hand.
Has one ever been touched like this before?
How did we miss the fonder in the fire?

—Charles Edward Eaton
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

In Death Many Things Look The Same

While I burned hangers
from the angle iron
on the weld truck
parked off the refinery's back road,

the sunflower's green
and yellow bodies shone
brighter than the burning cut of iron,
the sparks from the arcing
weld rod blew off
through the late autumn air
faint as red petals
wizened and frosted.

—Robert P. Cooke
Highland, Indiana

THE WRECKER

by
Jack Thames

The wrecker waits on oil-stained hard-stand next to the rest rooms. The vending machines filled with cokes and nabs stand between it and the white ceramic tile wall of Max's Full Service Gas Station. It waits here, every morning, for Joe Littlefield.

Joe Littlefield, a lanky young man of twenty, approaches the gas station from the bus stop. In the darkness of the early morning the station appears peaceful even though it sits on the southeast corner of Smith and Hawthorne, one of the busiest intersections in town. With the station lights out the traffic signal in the intersection illuminates the side of the building and the wrecker's windshield, alternating red, yellow, and green. As Joe approaches with one hand in his jeans pocket, the other carrying his lunch, his eyes never leave the wrecker.

"Yeah, it's just a matter of time before I get my own wrecker," thinks Joe as the gasoline scent of the station reaches his nostrils. "Maybe I'll even get my own station. Everybody can kiss my ass then, especially my old bastard stepfather."

Arriving early, Joe walks slowly around the wrecker. He examines the tires, hydraulic lift, padlocked tool box, gas can, road wheels, every inch of the wrecker. He needs no light because Joe has performed this ritual every morning since leaving his Uncle Mike's farm two years ago. In the early morning darkness and the colored glow of the traffic signal, the wrecker looks crisp and clean. Beautiful.

As he continues his examination, Joe pays particular attention to the green paint and the white lettering spelling, *Max's Towing Service*. Every morning Joe imagines the day that the white lettering will say

Joe Littlefield's Towing Service, or simply *Littlefield's Towing Service*, but not *Joe's Towing Service*. Nothing as common as "Joe" would be on his wrecker.

In the sultry dark Joe remembers the summer day when he was ten and his mother told him, and his six-year-old sister, that she would marry a shift supervisor at the hosiery mill where she worked. It was a hot steamy day like this one in the back yard of the triplex where they lived. The back yard was strewn with broken toys, broken tools and discarded household items. Here and there a clump of grass managed to hold on, but for the most part nothing grew. Under the dead tree by the chain-link fence that separated their back yard from the triplex behind them, Joe's mother served Kool Aid and Oreo Cookies.

The jingling of Edna's keys as she opens the door to the station's office brings Joe back. Edna, a short plump woman with strawberry-blond hair pulled back in a tight bun, opens the station every morning. In the crook of her left arm she carries the station's books, a plastic grocery bag dangles from her left hand with her *Future-Systems Weight Loss Plan* dietary lunch inside. Edna seems forever on a diet but never loses any weight. She doesn't appear to mind, and no one dares ask how she feels as she goes from one weight loss plan to another. A lot of good-natured ribbing goes on at the station, but Edna never joins in. Edna maintains her distance.

Joe never speaks to Edna first in the morning. He waits for her emotionless "Good morning" before offering his own non-committal "Morning." Some mornings Edna says nothing and on those morn-

ings neither does Joe. Joe spent no time wondering why Edna didn't speak, nor about anything else that happens at the station, because nothing there makes any consequence to him. Nothing matters, except the wrecker.

As soon as Edna opens the office, Joe gets the keys from the key box and heads back to the wrecker. First he checks all the fluid levels, then he cranks the engine and lets it idle. While the wrecker warms up, Joe unlocks the gas pumps and helps Edna move the displays outside, constantly listening to the cyclic rumble of the engine. After opening the station, Joe climbs into the warm cab and does the radio check.

"I'm going now, Edna," says Joe into the microphone.

"OK, Joe," answers Edna into the mike of the office base station.

The wrecker turns right onto Hawthorne and heads for the expressway on-ramp. Roaring, accelerating, it gains speed as Joe flips on the police scanner and locks it onto the emergency band. The wrecker merges smoothly into the expressway traffic, eastbound into the sun. The sun, now a bright orange ball at the end of the expressway, draws long, early morning shadows like tails on the eastbound cars. The westbound cars chase the shadows down the expressway. As the hour approaches seven, the gap between the cars zooming by narrows steadily.

From his position in the cab of the wrecker, Joe sees the mass of rush-hour traffic as one huge sea of glass and steel. With the senses of an Apache scout, he looks for subtle irregularities in the traffic. Steam rising from under a hood, traffic slowed in just one lane, nuisances to everyone else, are opportunities to Joe.

An overheated Buick stops traffic in the right lane of the eastbound expressway. Shooting down the expressway shoulder, the sudden roar of the engine and crash of the tackle make the heads of frustrated commuters snap to the right in salute as the wrecker passes. Joe gets the car off the expressway, onto the shoulder. Then, after a quick check of the driver's financial condition, Joe bleeds the radiator and adds coolant. The police arrive in time to help the frazzled driver back into the stream. It never changes.

In and out, back and forth, the wrecker flows with the swirling sea of traffic. In the billows of rush hour, Joe and the wrecker are one, living in their natural element, the expressway. From his master's seat on the bridge of the wrecker, Joe could do anything. He could jump a curb, cross a median, talk back to Edna on the radio. If there needed to be a gap in the traffic, one appeared. If the wrecker was bound in the wrong direction, a switch back materialized. No power in heaven, or the expressway, was greater than the wrecker.

Joe's eyes tear from the gas fumes coursing through the open window, but he likes the sensation. He likes the rain in his face, too, but this morning an orange sun in a cloudless sky bakes the expressway below. The hot stale wind, the sway of traffic, the rapid-fire explosion of the automobiles' engines mixing together make Joe feel something he has never felt any other time or place. Welcome.

Some cried, some cursed, some shouted with joy when faced with the wrecker. No matter to Joe. Towing shackles and payment methods are all that concern him. With the dexterity of an eel, Joe swarms over fallen autos, finds the problem, assesses the damage. If Joe can't fix it in a few minutes on the side of the road, it goes to Max's station. Fender benders go to Max's body shop if the driver has no preference, or to the police impoundment lot if they were serious enough. At the end of the day he cannot tell you who he has helped. Joe rarely looks into anyone's face.

"Someday I'm going to have me one of them telephones in my wrecker," thinks Joe, watching a woman make a call from the driver's seat of a powder blue Nissan Maxima.

The Maxima woman, an expressway regular, Joe had seen many times. Her dark brown hair falls to her shoulders and turns up inside, in one of those styles the smart women in magazines wear. Large round designer sunglasses cover her eyes. An open collar exposes a single gold chain accenting a beautifully contoured neck. Around the cellular telephone are soft fingers with manicured nails. A gold bracelet surrounds one wrist, a silver Rolex the other. Her complexion looks perfectly smooth and tan.

What Joe can't see, he imagines. Inside, the Maxima would be enveloped in the fragrance of perfume and leather. Her voice would be softly feminine yet unemo-

tional. Joe has seen the Maxima woman so many times, he watches for her daily. Yet, he never fantasies sex with her the way he does the blond waitress at Denny's. No, fantasy must have a toe hold in reality.

About nine-thirty Joe drives across the expressway overpass and pulls into the One-Stop Convenient Store. Going inside, Joe sees the usual people. Saying nothing, he buys a large coffee and, since he feels in an especially good mood this morning, a chocolate doughnut. Joe returns to the wrecker with his purchases. Watching the traffic die, tasting the sweetness of the doughnut, Joe remembers his mother's Oreos.

"Take as many as you want," says Joe's mother as she tears open the bag of Oreo cookies. What a splendid occasion, yet completely unexpected!

"You know how I been workin' at the hosiery mill since your daddy run off," began Joe's mother to her preoccupied children. "Mr. Badham, the shift supervisor. . . Well," Joe's mother hesitates, "Mr. Badham says he wants to get married to me." Now she has their attention. "Only thing is he don't know if he wants two little kids, one maybe, but not two."

"Accident reported, two cars, no injuries, Seamore exit south. Acknowledge," announces the police scanner, returning Joe Littlefield to work.

The wrecker's engine explodes to life. With a hiss the air brake releases, letting the wrecker roll into the street. Back to work.

"This is Car one-five-five, enroute to accident, Seamore exit south. ETA in one-zero minutes. Over," answers a police cruiser.

"Station, clear."

"One-five-five, clear."

Pushing the wrecker hard, Joe arrives at the accident site just after the police. "Not much of an accident," observes Joe. A green Chevette had pulled out of a parking lot in front of a metallic gray Jeep Cherokee. Some shards of glass and plastic are sprinkled in the street. The Chevette had taken the worst of it, the left front fender pushed half way through the wheel well. It would not be driveable. The Jeep's bumper and grill are crushed with the right front headlight shattered as well. "If the radiator's ok, he'll drive away," thinks Joe, passing the wreck.

The Jeep driver, a portly middle-aged man, sits in the Jeep talking into his cellu-



Photos by Frank Wolf

lar phone. The Chevette driver, a slender young woman about Joe's age in jeans and a sweater, stands on the sidewalk. Turning on his red, rolling lights, Joe pulls the wrecker off the road just past the accident. The police car had stopped short of the collision, blocking the lane, blue lights flashing. From the police car emerges Officer Cox.

"Damn, it's Cox," says Joe aloud in the privacy of his cab. "I'll be here all day." A wrecker driver must be quick, for a wrecker makes no money standing still.

Frustrated, anticipating boredom, Joe crosses his arms and sinks into the seat, determined to wait defiantly. With no other place to go, Joe escapes into his memories.

"You see, Mr. Badham ain't never been married before," Joe's mother looks up at something, somewhere, as she talks. "He don't have no kids, and he don't think he can raise two little ones." Now, looking back at Joe, she continues, "So, Joe, I called your Uncle Mike and he said you can come live on his farm."

"Now, how would that be?" asks Joe's mother, bending over and smiling, her face very close to his.

"Why I got to go live with Uncle Mike?" responds Joe, suddenly not wanting any more Oreos.

"Like I told you," responds Joe's mother, straightening up, the smile disappearing from her face, "Mr. Badham thinks that two kids is too many and your sister is just little, so it's best that you go live with Uncle Mike. You can help out on the farm. You'll like it there, Uncle Mike has animals. And your sister and me will come visit you all the time. You understand."

But Joe didn't understand. At night young Joe would lie motionless in his bed staring at the ceiling, straining his ten-year-old mind for some reason, any reason, why this was happening to him. In the morning he would wake from a dreamless sleep, still lying in the same position, still staring at the same spot. Joe could not be sure that he had slept.

Standing beside an endless dirt road in front of his Uncle Mike's house, with one bag of clothes and a few toys, Joe watched his stepfather's clattering, coughing old Ford carry his mother, sister, and his life away. The ache in his chest at that moment was almost more than he could stand. It felt as though his chest would split open in the middle, and his heart would run down the road chasing that old car.



Looking down the road long after the old Ford had vanished, huge tears rolled down Joe's face. "Stop that, now," commanded Uncle Mike. "We'll have none of that." Joe looked up at his uncle and saw his mother's stern face. And he did stop it.

Even now the recollection causes Joe's face to grow longer. The wretched sickness in his stomach, the shaking in his jaw, and the ache in his chest, though, are gone. Joe has learned how not to feel.

Looking back to make sure that all oncoming traffic had seen him, Officer Cox strides slowly and deliberately around the mating automobiles, carefully examining his reflection in the windows. Portly Man holds up one finger to acknowledge Officer Cox, and to let him know that he will be just a few more minutes. Slender Woman walks self-consciously toward Officer Cox. However, until he straightens his tie, flattens his stomach and levels his gun belt on his hips, Officer Cox ignores the two drivers. Once satisfied with his appearance, Officer Cox abruptly turns away from the wreck and motions toward the curb.

When Portly Man fails to move quickly from the jeep, Officer Cox raps on the driver's window and in a loud, clear voice says, "Out of the car. Sir." Adding, a moment later, "Now! Sir."

Officer Cox climbs the curb and faces the street, forcing Portly Man and Slender Woman to stand in the gutter. Slowly opening his black book and removing his stainless steel pen from the holder, Officer Cox convenes the court of the expressway.

He turns first to Portly Man, then to Slender Woman, then back to Portly Man as he conducts his roadside inquiry. Looking askance into the large, outboard mirrors, Joe watches the dance.

Fear, embarrassment, self-doubt, pride, vanity, shame wash across Joe's face from the long rectangular mirrors. Looking into their eyes first, then at their mouths, then their hands, finally their body movements, Joe could feel the emotions run through them. He could see it, he could feel it, but he can never be part of it. The mirrors brought the scene to Joe, Joe gave nothing back.

Court adjourned, Office Cox motions Joe into position in front of the fallen Chevette. Joe works quickly to connect the Chevette to the wrecker. Expressionless drivers wait as Joe does his job. Portly Man will drive his rumpled Jeep to his urgent meeting. Slender Woman's friend will pick her up as soon as she can get away. Together, they will stop by Max's station later to make arrangements to have the car resurrected.

Lights flashing, Joe revs the wrecker's engine, then drags the Chevette into the open street. Cars rush in to fill the space as the wrecker disappears into traffic. The driver, following immediately behind the wrecker, sees Joe's face in the long, side view mirrors, and nothing else.

J. Thames lives in Greensboro, North Carolina.

*Danny Mohamed, o/c by John Mohamed
Photo by Dennis Hunter*



for John Mohamed

he painted the soul,
the intangible breath
of the Lord
that dwells deep
in all of us—

the warm
dark-eyed trust
of the child

the sun-gaze
of violets
looking back
at the April sky

the waking of love
to the first touch
of day

the hands
of a woman
folded
to whispered
pure syllables
of prayer

he painted the soul,
he taught us to love

—Charles B. Tinkham
Hammond, Indiana

“Portrait of Nanette” (Camille Pissarro)

Solemn girl in a blue smock
whose folds Maman arranged,
your hands rest against each other
like sleeping doves,
as you are told.

You will be still,
though the bow is too tight
on your copper hair,
and not to your taste,
but you will not smile.
Maman made you wear
your brown school shoes
instead of pumps,
black pantaloons
although you're almost twelve.

You think:
next time I will
pinch my cheeks until they flame,
lift my skirt so slightly
Maman will never notice my petticoat
until the portrait is finished.

—Constance Vogel
Glenview, Illinois

Dali Museum, St. Petersburg

Into the unexpected I step,
from the outside blue-sky
blooming-geraniums sun-on-the-water world,
to a man-made one of wit, strangeness,
exaggeration, imagination gone wild—
like the flora and animals
of the Amazon Rain Forest.

I sidle into Dali's works,
born from the grey labyrinth of his brain
and the visceral red of his heart,
wander among bass fiddles
shaped like female torsos,
stumble over watches
draped over low leafless branches,
stand in clearings, intoxicated,
looking out as others look in.

—Ella Cavis
Bradenton, Florida

Dictum

(Dedicated to George Sotos, artist, teacher, friend)

As the gas burner blooms
when caressed by a burning match
so I demonstrate life
in what I attempt to make
as I work at my craft.

No matter what work,
no matter the form,
no matter the tools,
no matter the norm
it is the effort of hands,
of head and heart that tells.
It is the need to do,
to create,
to give with love
to a sometimes uncaring world,
in a celebration of life—
a disciplined gesture
producing contentment
with level floors
and stable furniture
if not flowers of delight.
They become closely-fitting machine parts
and their precise threads—
if not bursts of fireworks.

It is hope for a sympathetic
eye and ear,
a smile for a smile
and a tear for a tear—
it is hope for the next meal
and tonight's bed—
for a clean, dry shirt
and a drink of inspiration—
for the common denominators
of living and loving
to permit us to continue
pursuing the Muses.
How else to practice
the worn, if not passé dictum,
“Art Is Life”?

—Henry White
Crown Point, Indiana

Kandinsky

The century
was an orange vassal
no poet can claim
a European rendezvous
when it was all over
and the hot blood
carried off pastels,
the sun was out
childhood returned
the leaves had veins
and pretense was overtaken
in the night's debris.

—B. Z. Niditch
Brookline, Massachusetts



*James Mohamed, o/c by John Mohamed
Photo by James Madison*



Water color by Judith Rice

MEMOIRS OF A CATHOLIC GRADE SCHOOL STUDENT

by
Meribeth Swartz

My house and my grade school were separated by a city block, my house across the street from one corner of the block and my family's church and my school across the street from the opposite corner. St. Joseph Catholic Church, a massive, century-old structure, stands on a street that connects the north and south ends of town. A broad sidewalk alongside the church leads to the front doors of the rectangular, two-story brick building which housed the eight grades of St. Joseph School. It was built the year of my mother's birth, 1920. She, her siblings, my sisters, and all of my cousins on that side of my family attended St. Joseph's.

One half the length of the building sits

in the shadows of the church. During the years I attended the school, a house, on the other side of the walk and home to the Holy Humility of Mary order of nuns, was situated in front of the other half of the school building. The house and the church partially obscured the view of the school. If you didn't know the school was there, you would probably miss it as you rode by in a car.

Eight concrete steps rise to the front doors of St. Joseph School. I recall using these doors only for going to and coming from lunch in the cafeteria which was in the basement of the church and for such other business as attending school functions. Otherwise, we used the side doors for our comings and goings.

At each end of the building were doors opening onto stairs that descended to the playground areas. Asphalt spread from the bottom of the steps to the walls of the gymnasium which extended from the back of the school, making the building T-shaped. At recess, the extension served to separate the girls and boys, the girls having the smaller area on the north side of the gym, and the boys, presumably because they needed more space for such boys-only games as softball, had the larger area on the south side. A stretch of the asphalt behind the gym connected the two playgrounds. The girls were rightfully awarded this area which was of little use other than, in higher grades, for watching the boys at their rough and tumble sports and for

flirting with them at the invisible demarcation line which extended from the southeast corner of the gym. While no rules governed what grades used this area, the higher the grade, the more likely the girls were to migrate there, with eighth-grade girls often dominating the space closest to the line. The school was not blessed with such luxuries as swings and seesaws, although it was in earlier times, as evidenced by the mammoth skeletal remains in the grass beyond the asphalt. So the only physical activities young girls ever engaged in were jump-roping, tag, and red rover. But older girls were much too sophisticated for anything but boy-watching, and as we stood at the boundary, we hoped some daring, and interested, boys would come within flirting range.

Inside the school, high on the wall opposite the front doors, was a picture portraying Jesus' ascension into heaven. The front entrance was a hallway which opened perpendicularly onto another hallway running the length of the school. On the first floor were the first- and second-grade classrooms to the left, and to the right, the third- and fourth-grade classrooms. Above these rooms were the fifth-through eighth-grade rooms with the seventh and eighth grades occupying the end rooms over the first and fourth grades.

Across the hall from the second-grade and third-grade classrooms were doors to the gym, and at each end of the hallway were stairs. Traditionally, students in the lower four grades never ascended the stairs leading to the hallowed halls of the upper grades and the school office, unless, of course, a student met with trouble, necessitating a visit with the principal. The office, a tiny room probably no more than six feet wide, was directly above the front entrance hallway. The nuns' and teachers' private bathroom, with a single toilet and a small sink, was crowded into this minute space. As a young student, before I knew of the existence of the school office, I used to think that nuns never went to the bathroom because they never left their classrooms. And besides, they had all that fabric in their habits hanging on them. Surely they had some sort of contraption underneath to collect their urine.

The students' restrooms, known as "lavatories," were in the basement, the girls' at the left end, the boys' at the right end. The girls' lavatory was dark and dank, and I assume the boys' was the same. The

floor was cement, and there was no ceiling, only the bottom of the floors above with all the wiring and plumbing exposed. Two naked, low-wattage light bulbs dimly lit the large room. Eight toilets were enclosed in silver-painted metal stalls, four each on opposite walls. Throughout my eight years, I used only two toilets exclusively because they had the best lighting. They were the middle two sharing the same wall with the sinks. Above the sinks and the first three stalls were frosted windows that allowed daylight. I tried using the toilet in the first stall but didn't like its close proximity to the sinks where giggling girls washed their hands. This activity, I was sure, would have imposed on my privacy, as only a thin sheet of metal and a few inches separated them from me. I never used the last toilet in that row or any of the four on the other wall because of the darkness. If there were spiders at home within these stalls—and there were, I wanted to be able to see them. At one end of the lavatory, a few feet from the sinks, were three uncovered shower stalls that appeared not to have been used in years. Thoughts of showering in that room made me shiver. The lavatory was always cold, even in fall and spring. It was as if the Catholic architects deliberately excluded heat from the basement plans so as to keep us from loitering down there. It worked.

The eight classrooms were similar in appearance. Along two walls were blackboards and above them cork-boards which I occasionally helped to decorate using skinny, quarter-inch pins that were difficult to handle even with my nimble fingers. At the back of the rooms were cloakrooms, and next to them large supply closets. Each room had the same number of windows which were ceiling high. We raised them from the bottom and lowered them from the top to circulate the air when the rooms were stuffy. A very long pole that had at the end of it a hook that fit into a hole at the top of the window was used to lower them. The nuns performed this task, but as we matured, they sometimes allowed certain—stronger—ones of us the honor. Centered high on the walls that were considered the front of the rooms were crucifixes. Pictures of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and religious scenes were hung on the walls, while American flags were displayed in the corners near the doors. Every morning began with prayers first, then the Pledge of Allegiance.

St. Joseph's was taught by nuns and lay teachers. I had four of each and vividly remember them all. Beginning with first grade my teachers were Sister Mary Christina, Miss Howard, Mrs. Blair, Sister Mary Francis, Mrs. Moore, Mrs. Walters, Sister Novena, and Sister Ursulina.

Blair the Bear, a tiny woman whose wiry hair reminded me of steel wool, had taught third grade for eons and was said to be mean, but she was just old and probably tired. Mrs. Moore was a widow in her forties or fifties whose first year at St. Joe's was teaching my fifth-grade class. We didn't like her much because she gave a lot of homework. Then when she slipped on the ice and broke her right wrist, some of us felt sorry for her. Two friends and I even went to visit her at home and took her a card signed by the class. But when she didn't ease up on the homework and graded our papers with scratchy, unreadable marks, we lost all sympathy for her.

Sister Christina was young and cherubic, her chubby cheeks framed by the starched, white headpiece of her habit. She was sweet, too, the best teacher a first-grader could ever want. She made the transition from public school kindergarten to parochial grade school very smooth for us. Sister Novena was our seventh-grade teacher. We referred to her as Big Bertha because of her immense bulk. She was known for sending boys on Fritos runs to the store next door. She intended these to be clandestine errands, instructing them to go the longer route by using the front doors so we wouldn't see them cutting through the parking lot. After a couple of runs, however, the entire class knew about the missions, unbeknownst to her. Who was she kidding, anyway? Fritos bags are not noiseless, and Fritos breath is hard to hide.

My eighth-grade teacher was Sister Ursulina, in her first year at St. Joe's. Although she was in her fifties, she was able to relate to us in ways no other teacher had. She was a refreshing difference after all our years there, and we liked and respected her. She was a lot of fun, and that is why we thought we could pull off "zoo time" while she was in the classroom. Many were the times we were left unsupervised while she attended to business in the office down the hall: Sister Ursulina was also the school principal. In her absences, some of us would engage in making various animal sounds when someone, anyone, would call out "zoo time." We

thought this activity was outrageously funny, being the eighth-graders that we were. One Friday afternoon I suggested we have "zoo time" when she returned to the room. She seemed in a good mood, so we thought she would be amused. Four of us, Marcia, Janet, Paul, and I, agreed to do it. After Sister Ursulina settled in at her desk, I counted on my fingers for all to see the signal. On three I mouthed the words, "zoo time!" Suddenly, I got cold feet as did Marcia and Janet. Paul, however, snorted like a pig, and Sister Ursulina, who apparently had been attending to unpleasant business in the office, snapped, "What do you think this is? A zoo?" Of course, no one answered her. It was all we could do to keep from roaring.

One of my most memorable teachers was Mrs. Walters. She had a reputation for being downright mean. She was even built like a monster and had the biggest breasts I had ever seen. I wouldn't mention this fact except that they were grotesquely unnatural and accentuated her monstrous guise. I dreaded the beginning of sixth grade but soon discovered, however, that she was not at all what kids before me had said she was, unless you happened to be a boy who happened not to be especially studious. She sometimes smacked boys' hands with a ruler. Once she pulled a boy by the ear, but I don't remember why. None of us, however, would forget her dumping one boy's desk over because he had not straightened it to her satisfaction. Her unfair treatment of boys was obvious, and this really puzzled me because she had two sons of her own of whom she often spoke highly. All in all, Mrs. Walters was a very effective teacher and enjoyed a good time as much as anyone. Her rampages were not that frequent and could even be anticipated if someone happened to misbehave when she was in a foul mood. Heck, she was probably experiencing PMS.

Sister Francis, rose-complected and pretty, reminded me somewhat of Sister Christina but was slimmer and perhaps slightly older. With a sense of humor I thought non-existent in nuns, Sister Francis made fourth grade fun. She was the only nun, or teacher for that matter, I knew who participated in our sports and recreational activities. A nun running bases with one hand hiking up folds of blue fabric, revealing blue stockings, while the other hand secured her headpiece was a sight to see. Sister Francis loved God's nature. She

especially loved the sunshine and brought its warmth and brilliance to our attention, in case we hadn't already noticed. She lived life with gusto. Everyday was an adventure for Sister Francis and, therefore, for her students. Rarely was she in an ill humor. But one sunny afternoon in spring, something got to her, and we saw her out of character.

After lunch she brought into the classroom and placed on her desk a dishpan of water, a bar of soap, a washcloth, and a towel. She summoned a boy, whose squalid appearance she apparently could no longer stand, to the front of the room. Without preface to her demonstration, Sister Francis scrubbed his dirty face, ears, arms, and hands in front of his bewildered and embarrassed classmates. She then explained how cleanliness is next to Godliness, but we were in a communal state of shock and missed her point. I was deeply troubled as I tried to understand how this show of hers fit into Jesus' lesson to treat others as we want to be treated. Her behavior that afternoon was the only blemish in her otherwise wonderful personality. Unfortunately, I cannot think of her, or of fourth grade, without being reminded of the humiliation she brought upon that boy.

I looked forward to entering second grade because word had gotten out before school started that our teacher was young and new to her profession. Based on the testimonies of my older sister and my cousins and neighbors, I had come to equate age with temperament. Young teachers were nice, old ones mean. So I couldn't wait to start second grade with Miss Howard, a brand-new teacher. Everyone immediately liked her. She was pretty—looks were impressive to young school children then, at least to me they were. And she was nice. Or so it seemed. I began to sense that Miss Howard was nicer to some kids than to others, and I was definitely one of the latter. I just knew she didn't like me. Instances that have been obscured with time gave me reason to believe this, but two specific events confirmed my suspicions.

Both incidents involved desk rearranging, an activity we all looked forward to as it broke up the monotony of school. Changing desks was like having a party. It meant not having to do school work for a couple of hours, and we were allowed to visit with our friends. Then we looked forward to returning the next day to enjoy our new neighbors and the new view of the classroom.

On the first of these two occasions, I did not get the new view the others did. Miss Howard neglected to move my desk. I wanted to think it was an oversight, but I couldn't help the nagging feeling that she deliberately slighted me, and I was hurt. The next time we changed seats, mine was the first Miss Howard moved. I thought she was making amends for forgetting me the time before. Then she seated the new boy, Marcus, next to me, and I felt special because who wouldn't want to sit next to the new student? But I soon started hurting again as the realization came over me that this was another of Miss Howard's acts of unkindness toward me: Marcus was black. While I had no problem with Marcus' color, I was sure she thought I would.

I could never understand why Miss Howard didn't like me or why she treated me the way she did. But because I felt I was treated unfairly, I learned a lesson in discrimination at a young age. While I didn't get a new view of the classroom that first day we moved desks, on the second occasion I got a new view of life. I remember little else of second grade after that because I merely tolerated Miss Howard for the rest of the year.

Occasionally I hear stories from people who attended Catholic schools, while rarely do I hear any from those who went to public schools. There is a bond among Catholics and former Catholics who share the experience of being educated in small parochial schools. We are an invisible fraternity/sorority whose members often uncannily identify one another within minutes of introduction. It does not matter that we were educated in different schools, only that we had the unique, but universal, experience of being taught the narrow scope of Catholicism by nuns and by lay teachers who were often unaccredited.

A few years after grade school, I left the religion of my childhood, having become disillusioned with the Church and its teachings. Yet my reminiscences of the education it gave me are, for the most part, pleasant ones. Although I did not think so at the time, I realize now that my education in a Catholic grade school was a good one, teaching me valuable lessons by which I would live the rest of my life. It significantly contributed to making me the person I am.

(Author's note: Teachers' and students' names in this essay are fictitious.)

M. Swartz lives in Valparaiso, Indiana.



Allotted Days South

early May
clear repeated bird whistles
outline Nathalie's Buffalo Bayou
wetland acres
ill-scented shrubs ring
adjoining marsh at right angles

midday it's an intrusion
joining her there
he swamps her with Pretense,
boring details of his own
importance
thunder clover wisteria dogwoods
overhead, underfoot
very far out-of-the-way

green-eyed Creole beauty
outbursts O laughter become this
widow all her born days
green-eyed.

—Jessica Freeman
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

The Watcher

While you are watching me,
Who's watching you?

I'm black, and in this society
That makes me
Very visible.

I wish I were invisible like you
But since I'm black
Invisibility for me
Can never be.

I've watched you several times
While you were watching me.
You thought I didn't see,
But I did see—
You watching me.

—Ken Shannon
Gary, Indiana

Eyes

Eyes with a soaking quality.
Wet grass boiled with tan sugarcane
and flecks of black.
Museum eyes.
They made me laugh with you
all night in Dooley's Den
or want to hit you with a textbook
when you didn't see it coming.
Black and green—wet and still,
they drained from mine
love and anger and unexpectedness.
On and off again and again.
And, in our energy, we worshipped
with our eyes.

—Marianne Broyles
Memphis, Tennessee

Pima County Fair, 1953

My very first fair
My very first try

My doughnuts, yeasty light
honey-hued

All entries are in
each hoping to be best

Cases filled
with

pies and pickles
jams to judge

rows of quilts
and afghans, too

Great horses—
restless in their stalls

Ponderous pigs, squealing

Cases of chickens, squawking

Cows mooing—goats chewing

Rabbits:
white ones
brown ones
black and white ones

A sunbeam illuminates the dusty air

Excited children race about
Entrants, edgy, hoping for the prize
admiring the fancy displays

The judges choose!
A blue ribbon on my plate!

I'm dancing in the aisle!

—Laura Ruben
Hammond, Indiana



Photo courtesy of Laura Ruben

Tell me of the springtime
when I'm no longer young,
can't walk through fragrant orchards
to hear the blackbird's song.
Tell me of the meadows
soft with emerald grass,
when my days are heavy-laden
and time is slow to pass.
When old age keeps me housebound
and there's sameness to my days,
just tell me of the springtime
and I'll tread through bygone Mays.

—Virginia Borman Grimmer
Schererville, Indiana

A WRITER'S CLUB

by
Larry Bangert

Jonas Eliason's galoshes squeak, announcing his frantic arrival through the oak door of his posh, uptown office. "Salutations to one and all!" he blurts while tossing his fedora onto the desk top. "Please forgive my tardiness. I hope this day finds you physically well and emotionally excited about our meeting."

"Yah. . .whatever," a voice grunts.

"And now, just as the sun delivers a new day and budding flowers welcome the warmth of spring—so too, we shall begin bringing forth a miracle; the miracle of written words. May the positive energy which flows from soul to pen also be present as we prepare to share."

"Aw geez, there he goes again," whines Melvin. "Don't even got his big-bucks, fancy-schmancy coat off, and he's already spittin' crap-talk like a slurring ten-year-old. Every time we meet he's gotta go startin' up with the poetic garbage. Can't ever just say 'Hey, Melvin, how the hell are ya' or somethin' like that, it's always some kinda Shakespearean mumble-jumble that I don't give a shit about." With his soliloquy complete, Melvin melts into the cushions of his chair with arms crossed and eyes riveted to the numbered, pastel nature print.

"Ah, Melvin, welcome to our little writer's session," retorts Jonas. "I sincerely apologize if I have in some way offended you. Others among us have expressed exuberance over my congenial, yet dramatic entrances, but if it causes discomfort within your person or hinders your creativity, please advise and I shall refrain."

"Geez. Don't gotta be a damn martyr or nothin', I just wish you'd cut the crap-talk a bit."

"Thank you for that positive feedback, Melvin. As you all know, I value your input and strive to make this a positive experience for all." Jonas flashes a designer smile while hanging up his full-length cashmere coat.

"Uh. . .Jonas?" a timid voice is barely heard over silence.

"Oh joy! My quiet compadre is with us and talking today. What is it, Charles, my friend?"

"I. . .um. . .uh. . .just uh. . .well. . ." Charles strains for words that say what he feels without creating conflict. He's wishing he could just write, never talk, he is much more eloquent on paper. "I think yer. . .um. . .yer way. . .of. . .well. . .starting our. . .sessions. . .is. . .uh. . .well. . .different."

"Could you expand on that for me, Charles?"

Charles's hands race around each other while his knees knock. "Well. . .it. . .uh. . ." Charles inhales deeply, hoping new air will coax dynamic words out, but few words accompany the exhaled air. "It. . .gets me. . .uh. . ." Finally, a flurry of words spew out. ". . .excited 'bout writing." He smiles, mission accomplished.

"Thank you, Charles. A beautiful sight to me is that of a passive man mustering the courage to be assertive. Very commendable." Jonas smiles again, mostly at his own choice of words.

"Now, let us talk of writing. If you'll recall, I asked you all to construct a piece of fiction. Length or grammar is of no

importance for this exercise, I simply requested that you contrive something; allow the gossamer wings of your imagination to carry you away to whatever setting or environment you choose. Now, shall. . ."

"Hey, Jonas," interrupts Eddie while peering through prison-like bars of greasy hair. "What's gozmer?" He waits for an answer but none is forthcoming. Well-oiled, dangling locks flirt with eye lashes and together they dance to the rhythm of periodic blinks. Hoping unobstructed eye contact will elicit a response, Eddie wipes his brow from left to right; wondering, chocolate-brown eyes are revealed. Exuberance jumps from them but intellectual inadequacy is just as prevalent. "Huh? What is it?"

"Well, Eddie. . .in literary terms. . .it refers to. . ."

"Don'tcha know what it means, Jonas?"

"Why, certainly I do! It. . .it means. . .um. . .uh. . .large."

"Hmm. O.K. Thank you." Eddie's eyes focus on his writing tablet, frustration visibly building on his face. Freeing his pencil from its spiral-bound captor, he jiggles it intensely between thumb and index finger.

"You're quite welcome, Eddie." Jonas's over-confidence rushes back. "A curious individual is one who will someday have. . ."

"Wait a minute, Jonas," says Eddie, still needing more. "You're saying our imaginations should fly away on *big* wings?"

"In a manner of speaking, that is correct," tiptoes Jonas, hoping no one sus-

pects his ignorance.

"My thing is all wrong," Eddie mumbles while crumpling a piece of paper. He throws it to the ground and begins scribbling words in his tablet.

Jonas nonchalantly picks up the paper, sets it on a nearby table, and proceeds. "My friends, fiction really does afford you the opportunity to escape reality and venture into whatever world you choose. With that said, who would like to transport us to another land first?"

Fran speaks up first. "Jonas, before we launch this ferry to never-never land, I have a question."

"Yes, Fran, what is it?"

"This hunk of fiction didn't have to be about ourselves, did it?" she asks while rubbing the tops of her denim-covered thighs.

"By no means, Fran, does your composition require self-reflection or self-incrimination. Remember, there are only two rules for today's writing—it should be fictional, and no other rules apply."

Pulling at the tight-fitting collar of her turtleneck, Fran commits. "Well, I guess I'll be vulnerable first. Do I need to stand up, or give it a title or anything like that?"

"You may commence in any manner you see fit."

Fran stands up, cracks her neck twice and turns her back to Jonas. She reads:

The year is 3000 and men have finally developed the correct attitude. They want to be hen pecked. They want to stay home, instead of going out with "the boys." They want love-making to go slower, be more passionate, and happen only when the woman initiates it. They feel sex should take place only after marriage. They want to be submissive. They want women to yell at them for leaving the toilet seat up. They want their women to be "bread winners," so they can be the "bread bakers." They want to be obedient servants to their almighty mistresses. They would rather have "quality time" than watch football on Sunday afternoons. In the year 3000, everything a man does, he does for his woman.

Unbelievable, you say? Well, that's fiction for you.

Fran faces Jonas, bows slightly and sinks into her chair; Jonas claps in response. "What a uniquely interesting point of view. Wonderful! Now what psychological factors do you suppose caused you to delve into the genre of futuristic fiction?"

"I'm not really sure. . . I think I was drunk."

"Now, now, now. I would hope at this point you don't need alcohol to be cre-

atively stimulated. However, I do believe your work has a quality that. . ."

"It's gotta quality that sucks!" blurts Melvin. "Ain't no damn fiction, it's fantasy. Not to mention the fact that it's a bunch of shit. No man ain't givin' up football for no woman in this century or any other."

"Melvin, you seem to be blocking out positive critique and accentuating the negative. I'm compelled to ask you to please keep your comments positive in nature."

"Yah, yah, yah, whatever."

"As long as we've got you, would you like to share your work?"

"Nope."

"Please, Melvin, sharing is good."

"You won't like what I wrote."

"How could I possibly dislike your composition, Melvin? It's only fiction."

"All right, all right, all right, I'll read it. But remember, I warned ya." Melvin pulls a tattered piece of paper from his back pocket and begins:

The deranged, psychopathic *cereal* killer needed breakfast, which worked out really well because the paperboy was walking up to his door at that very time. The killer had eaten so much human flesh that cows and pigs didn't taste quite right any more. The kid was delivering the local news but the killer was looking forward to Paperboy Au Jus. As breakfast approached. . .

"O.K. Thank you for sharing, Melvin," Jonas sputtered while fighting off an oncoming gag.

"Don't ya wanna hear about how the guy kills the kid or eats him or anything?" asks Melvin smugly.

"No, I think you've read more than enough."

"There he goes again with the snooty shit. Just 'cause somebody's got a different writing style than his, it ain't no good. Well, I'll tell ya what, Mr. King of the Writing World, you ain't shit!"

"Such an abundance of unwarranted hostility, Melvin. I was in no way inferring that your work is inadequate, I would merely like to wait until the others have shared their writing, so we can take time to thoroughly examine the intricacies of your story."

"Ya, whatever," Melvin grumbles, settling into his usual pout mode.

"I assure you, Melvin, as a gentleman and as your confidant, that we will talk more about your writing. I especially want to explore the emotional aspects of such a writing style."

From out of nowhere, Eddie jumps into the conversation. "Jonas, can I read my *new* work?"

"What do you mean your *new* work, Eddie?"

"Well, I think I did it wrong before. . . but now I got it right."

"By all means, please read."

Eddie slides to the edge of his chair, sits almost painfully erect, and begins:

I am a very happy eagle. I fly around the skies all day looking for food and watching people watch me. My big wings take me wherever I want to go. It's good to be free.

"Eddie, that is wonderful! Why did you edit your original draft?"





"Well, I had the gozmer thing wrong, which ended up making my story wrong. But then you said to think big and that gave me the freedom I didn't have as a canary."

"As a canary?"

"Yea, I decided to write about being a bird, but my bird was trapped by his own size and weakness."

"May I read your original version?" questions Jonas while reaching for the crumpled paper on the nearby table.

"I guess I don't care, as long as you know that I know it isn't right."

Reading the first version of Eddie's work aloud, Jonas understands:

I am a very happy canary. I fly around my cage all day singing and watching people watch me. My food and water are in dishes and I always have enough. I am safe and warm and liked. My little wings take me wherever in my cage I want to go. But I could be even more happy if only I was free.

Jonas jumps at the chance to take credit for Eddie's insight. "Why, Eddie, by my explaining the definition of gossamer, you were able to expand the confines of your imagination, transforming a pleasant, yet somber piece into a joyfully optimistic writing. Wonderful writing, my friend. Would someone else like to grace us with words of fictional wonderment?"

"Uh. . .Jonas. . .I. . .er. . .could. . .uh. . ."

"Ah, Charles, I was hoping you would step forward with an example of your creative stylings."

"Well. . .I. . .kinda. . .uh. . ." Charles bites his lip and wrings his hands, searching for the right words, any words.



"Charles, would you like me to read your work for you?"

"Please!" groans Charles, his chest falling after a heavy sigh. He pages through his tablet until he finds the page with one paragraph of neatly printed words. He passes the tablet to Jonas like a new parent handing over his first-born child.

Jonas studied the words. "Charles, this is truly excellent," prefaces Jonas before beginning the reading:

The quiet one is the best. He is many, yet one. But when he is the quiet one, he finds an inner peace, a solace. His refuge is paper, his strength a pen. The profound workings of his mind lose impact when spoken, but when they're communicated to paper, by pen and hand, they become elegantly articulated, thought-provoking, magical. The others talk and write. The quiet one can only write. But I think the quiet one is the best of us all.

"This is a magnificent composition, Charles. But it isn't fiction, it's non-fiction, it's reality," says Jonas, thinking a breakthrough is about to take place. "A story about a person who writes in different styles according to which personality he or she is isn't fiction, it's non-fiction, it's the story of all of your existences." Jonas pauses, trying to figure out where to go with this so that no momentum is lost.

"Jonas, may I share my work?"

A puzzled look falls on Jonas's face. "Why, of course you may. But who are you? I don't recognize you."

"My name is Antoine. I don't think we've ever met before. I've never written fiction, just poetry, but I've got this poem inside that seems like it would apply to your writer's club."

"Excellent, Antoine! Please, share your work."

Antoine rises, closes his eyes, folds his hands in front of him and stands completely still. Then, drawing a breath, he methodically begins his recitation:

One man's pleasure is another man's pain,
One man's set-back is another man's gain.
Beauty to me isn't beauty to you.
What I think is false, you think is true.
Who decides which opinion is best?
Which theory is fact, which is jest?
Only when you appreciate the contradiction,
Can you differentiate reality from fiction.
Fantasy, fact or make-believe,
They all rely on how we perceive.

Jonas is mesmerized by Antoine's verse. Finally he speaks, but not with the same confidence as before. "Wow! That's great! So what is this poem saying?"

"Well, Jonas, to me it says that fact is as much a state of mind as fiction. If Charles is convinced he is the greatest personality of all of us, he is. When Eddie was a canary, he was right, and when he became an eagle he was just as right. And maybe in the year 3000 men will be exactly the way Fran described."

"But if your theory is true, how do you explain Melvin's writing?"

"Well. . .I don't know. But *you* should know that, *you're* the doctor."

Jonas suddenly regains his composure, and with it, his arrogance. "An excellent assumption and a correct one." Jonas takes a token glance at his watch. "Unfortunately, we are out of time, but in our next session we will discuss the psychological implications of Melvin's writing."

"Just like him to promise to talk about my shit, then avoid it. What a bunch of crap."

"I am deeply sorry, Melvin. However, take comfort in the fact that next week we will start with your writing. In the meantime, I would like the rest of you to venture even further into your imaginations by writing a fantasy." Jonas stands, hoping to initiate their departure. "Now, may the creative juices that have filled your soul, overflow into the up-coming week."

With his literary benediction delivered, Jonas shakes hands with his patient and proceeds to his desk to begin dictating the progress made in today's therapy session.

Melvin, Fran, Eddie, Charles and Antoine stands, puts on his scarf, coat and hat, closes his writing tablet, tucks it under his arm and leaves.

L. Bangert lives in St. Paul, Minnesota.



Zapatista

the ground is hard,
stony,
almost cold in the morning,
there is an orange clay
between my toes
and a pebbly feel
beneath the thickness of my feet

I am young
and like a yielding tree
in the wind,
in the leaf-light
of morning--
my roots are not deep
and sometimes I dream

I sleep there--
over there--
between the stable
and the out-building
in that little
nest of straw
I am eleven years old
and do not know
the sound of the names
"father," "mother"

I follow the moon,
the sun--
and the man
on the great white horse

the earth thunders
beneath those hooves,
and the man
is like the wind riding
and his eyes are dark
with the darkness
of anger and tears

I follow this man

Charles Tinsley

Stasis

Flowers of the winter
In a land of hardened snow
Stand in memory like a gift.
Neither reaches, neither touches,
And the rift between us grows.

—Howard McMillen
Terre Haute, Indiana

My Brother's Keeper

What is it about
the rain
that sings
to me
in short-lived
illusion?
I listen as
it ripples down
for I know I am
out of harm's way
in fortune.
I close my windows
and my doors
dry
and
safe;
but what of the homeless
of man
and
of
beast
whose refuge
is but open spaces
in the way
of strong winds
that can make
the trees fly?
I cease to feel lucky
when the rain descends
for out there
my brothers
are weeping
along with the rain
that
keeps
on
falling.

—Jill Dimaggio
Boca Raton, Florida

My Grandmother's Hands

Stern hands of the aristocrat. My grandmother had
A way of rubbing my back with hands at times too strong.
Hands of the pianist, nervous, gifted,
Shedding music from endless practice.
Try again. Once again. Wring beauty from strength!

Again I see her hands in the garden patting the soil,
Wrenching weeds, by turns wrenching and smoothing the soil.
Bring growth from stubborn earth.

This year the children pull her from bed
To turn page after page in the story book—
Still sew stitch on stitch beyond her strength.
Until this morning
When I call on no one in the world to wake her.
I may hold onto the softness of a bony hand
Finally, finally quiet.

—Janna King
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

Nadine explores

goes for walks
at sunset and after,
down paved roads
and dirt eats
lemonheads for fuel
and ticks off couples
to clock her pace

when the sun is down
she imbeds it in her
heart walks out to a
party where she tries to
let it shine she dances,
gets picked up, she doesn't care
because she closes her eyes
and thinks about him
it's not the same but she
feels rebellious she sure
shows him! all with her
chest on fire

—Rose Schumacher
Goleta, California

Actaeon in Town

On the verge of spring
the lady in gray
stood back in her yard
staring his way.

What she saw there
before she saw him looking
who but she could say?
Could she?

What he knew was
she stood there staring
until she saw him
looking at her,
that old lady in gray
fixed on the verge of spring,
before, ashamed, he turned away.

He had no hounds,
she no maidens attendant,
nor pool nor youth nor beauty,
but he saw her naked again,
though cloaked and fixed in gray,
and the old wonder returned
and some of the shame
on the day people there
noticed again the budding.

—Hugh Hennedy
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Frank James, Out of Prison,

Fantasizes at the Track

My eyes crouch
over a red bandana,
45 flushing rings, diamond stickpins.

A stallion-chest balks
till I tug down my mask
and show who I am.

I whistle at his fist of bills,
again when his woman winks
her garter belt into my pocket.

I roll a cigarette,
stroll away,

giving the grandstand
my back.

—David Henson
Peoria, Illinois

Husband At War

Not knowing was a fresh battery
slipped inside the waiting,
her hands and legs
relentlessly on the move,
doing everything that didn't need to be done,
the last mote of dust swept away,
silverware polished again and again
to the dazzling point
where it almost scooped the sun.
The mailman couldn't slow her down,
her ears tuned to his step on the front porch,
a signal to pounce like a leopard
on the letter box,
fist through circulars and bills
for the envelope with that exotic stamp
of a rain-forest bird,
the gentle kiss of his handwriting,
its sorry absence kicking in
another round of sweeping and polishing,
her faith drowning in her face
reflecting wearily from
the linoleum floors, the knife blades.

—John Grey
Providence, Rhode Island

two old crows hiss

two old crows hiss as i near the deserted warehouse.
it has become their Memphis, their great pyramid.
& i am not Alexander down from Babylon, but the crows
do not know that.
they hiss with viper tongues.
i salute them & pass, unable to plunder their nests,
their treasures, even if i had such designs.
they fly off into a muggy afternoon sky, keeping one
detailed eye on my evacuation.
their flight resembles a ruptured figure eight.
i nearly smile.

—Kenn Mitchell
Eugene, Oregon

The Morphology of Tears

As Milton said, "The mind is its own place,"
bunkered in by skull and old, bandied flesh.
A river runs through it, changing the landscapes,
dislodging great humps of metamorphic
rock, eroding bones, wining the parched patches.
It's a secret place, but the eyes, seeing
both in and out, give it away, seeping
those womanly-shaped aquifer drops which, flashing
reflection, may look like fresh roe or like the,
heavy with returning, mind-trawling globe.

—Virginia V. Hlavsa
Bayside, New York

Signals

I stooped to stroke a kitten
so tiny that her needle-like front teeth
fitted around my little finger
which she sucked, trying to consume me.

I never knew I tensed
until she stopped her play
and flew at me, a ball of fury,
scratching and biting,
as humans do
at subtle signals
we do not know
we send.

—Mary Hazard
Lexington, Massachusetts

Flower Girl

Aunt Lisa's wedding album,
evidence of my earliest memory:
a pink dress which touched the floor,
straw basket on my arm,
walking down a white-carpeted aisle.
"Do you remember?" Aunt Lisa asks,
sitting beside me on the bed.
"You ran back down the aisle
to pick up the petals you'd thrown."

Flip the pages to the reception:
GRANDPA JOSH—with champagne glass, toasting
the bride and groom. (He caught me
in his bathroom, a needle in my arm.)
DAD—on the dance floor
with the pretty blond child
he is no longer proud of.
MOM—her arms around the happy girl
I could be again
if I ran back down the aisle
to pick up the petals I've thrown.

—Jacqueline Hechtkopf
Brentwood, Tennessee

Violent Reaction

Pain in wounded eyes
Flows from your face in currents
Strangling your mind
And claiming your soul

Ears knowing lies
Turn inward
Unable to focus
On honesty and truth

Fists clenched
Strike out!

—Elvin L. Isbell, Jr.
Liberty, Missouri

Social Services

I who wake
& go to sleep
alone am

known thruout
the Dept. for
my flair

at the window.
The jobless
queue

up like Elvis
worshippers
at Graceland

for hours
until foot-
sore they

approach one
at a time
& for a few

minutes
I love them
tender.

—Pete Lee
Ridgecrest, California

WOUNDED BEAR

by
Curtis E. Gibson

Motion in the darkness. Car lights.
His car.

I'm looking through a pair of
night-vision goggles, the good ones, with
the GEN II Plus image intensifier. My ears
are covered by head phones hooked to the
parabolic ear outside the van.

He pulls into the driveway across the
street and cuts the lights. Turns off his
engine. Opens his door.

In the back seat, two girls.

Bingo!

Young girls. Ten, twelve years old.
Cute kids. Both blonde. Frightened eyes,
red from crying.

"Inside," he tells them in his
policeman's voice.

The girls move toward the house, cling-
ing to each other. Stiff. They slow, suspi-
cious. Something is wrong. They stop.

"This ain't no police station," the tall
girl says.

"Substation," he tells her, using his
long arms to herd them toward the door.
"They'll send a car from downtown to pick
you up. Move it now. Let's go."

They go inside.

I remove the head phones and goggles.

Three micro-video cameras start send-
ing me pictures of the inside of the house
across the street. Two micro-tape record-
ers wait to be voice-activated.

I watch him on the monitors.

He pretends to be a police detective.
He's not. His clothes and car are a disguise
to fool the kids. His real name is Vincent
Bauer. He hurts children. For money.

I'm not a cop, either. I gather evidence
on people like Vincent Bauer.

My name is Wounded Bear. Comanche Indian. My hair is silver-black, usually clean, and falls well below my shoulders. I've been told my black eyes are dead. Some people see monsters in them. Maybe they do.

There are all kinds of monsters.
I've met mine.

Vincent Bauer doesn't live in that house across the street. He lives in a much nicer house, in another part of town. I've seen his kids. Nice, normal. Nice wife. Two dogs. They don't know he makes his money in child pornography.

My scanner beeps. His cordless phone. I won't even need the bugs. The number he called flashes on one of the screens. I punch it into the keyboard. It kicks back an address in Omaha, Nebraska.

"It's me," he says.

"How many?" asks the asthmatic on the other end.

"Two."

"Boys or girls?"

"Girls."

"Both?"

"Yeah."

A sigh. The asthmatic's.

"You'll like it," Vincent tells him.

"You want me to leave the phone off the hook? Let you hear what's happening?"

"I'd like that, but you'd better not. I've got customers in the viewing room. Drop it in the mail when you've finished. I'll take a look."

They hang up.

I watch the monitors. He walks over to the girls. They're sitting on the couch. Stiff. Knees drawn up. Hands in their laps. Deer in the headlights.

"Like I said," he tells them, "this is just a satellite substation. It will be at least an hour before they can get a female officer out here to pick you up. They want me to book you here, take your prints, all that stuff."

"Can't we just go home?" the short girl asks. "We won't ever do it again."

"Sorry," he says.

"My mom is really gonna be worried," the tall girl says. "Can I call her?"

"When you get downtown," he tells her, "you can make a call."

"Please."

"No," he says, taking off his jacket, letting them see his holstered gun.

"Pleeeeeease."

"No!"

They start crying. I see a momentary

flash of delight in his eyes; then it's gone.

"Hey now," he says, his voice becoming gentle, fatherly. "It's really no big deal. You kids just violated curfew. I'll book you here. In an hour they'll pick you up, take you downtown and call your folks. You won't spend the night in jail. Nothing like that. I'm just your neighborhood cop, not a monster."

He smiles at them, warm.

They smile back.

I watch him do the fingerprints. He's good. Acts like a cop. Kids trust cops. Kids have been taught to trust a lot of people.

While they wash the ink off their hands, he types out a phony police report. The tall girl says her name is Patricia. Her friends, she says, call her Patty. The shorter girl's name is Brittany. Shy. Talks in a whisper. Says they weren't doing anything wrong. Just going to the laundromat on the corner for a Pepsi.

He sets a video camera on a tripod. Films a few feet of them—for the records, he tells them. He hands each girl a green hospital gown and a brown paper bag.

"Go into the bathroom," he tells them. "Put your clothes into these bags. Take a shower. When you're finished, put on the gowns and come back out here."

The girls stare at him.

He takes the camcorder into the bathroom. Aims it at the shower stall and turns it on. No shower curtain. He comes back into the living room.

The girls haven't moved.

"Go on," he tells them. "Let's get this over with, okay? You can come out and watch TV until the female officer gets here. I can put on some rock and roll. You like rock and roll?"

The girls hesitate, suspicious again, looking at the camcorder.

"Don't worry about the camera," he says. "I'm required to show proof that I was not in the bathroom with you. You can shut the door if you want privacy. Just don't fool with the camera or you'll get me in trouble."

The girls believe him. They seem to relax. They go into the bathroom and close the door behind them.

He turns on the stereo. Loud. Rock and roll.

They shower for his camera.

He walks around like a happy kid, rubbing his hands together, rolling his hips to the music. He opens a long vial of white powder. Snorts a spoonful up his nose.

Closes his eyes. Stifles a sneeze.

The girls come out of the bathroom. Wet colts. They're calm, kidding each other about their gowns, nodding with the music from the stereo.

He is waiting for them. He slaps them. Hard.

They fall to the floor. Hold reddened faces. Shake. Pedal away. Wet feet slip on the carpet.

He brings the camcorder out of the bathroom. Aims it at the girls. Puts on a black hood. Takes off his shirt.

I turn down the volume. The tapes I've made contain more than enough evidence to take Vincent Bauer off the street. I should start my paper work. Gather my evidence. Leave. Stop watching the monitors.

He reaches for Patty. Grabs her hair. Pulls her off the floor. She hangs there, tiptoe-dancing.

He slaps her. I turn away. Eyes come back.

I watch Patty's pain.

He likes it. Gone from mean to evil.

I look at Patty. Blue chill. She seems to be staring right into the camera at me. I close my eyes.

Memories come. I try to push them away. Another girl. Twenty-five years ago. Her name was Rachel. Her eyes were locked on mine, asking me to help her. Pleading. There was nothing I could do. I was only seven years old.

Patty ugly-cries on the monitors.

Vincent's eyes. Happy, predator eyes. He's having such a good time. I feel my own scream coming. Push it down.

They say there's no cure for baby-raping, wet-eyed maggots like Vincent Bauer. They're wrong, you know.

I open the black case at my feet. Build the weapon in eighteen seconds. It's loaded in twenty-five. New can of CO2.

Gloves on. I open the back door.

Spotlight hits me in the eyes. I'm blind.

Cops, they say. Real ones. Two of them. One in a patrol car, the other in a tow truck. My van's been here eight days. They've come to tow it away.

They look in the van. Major interest.

I try to talk to them. They won't let me.

I point to the house. They throw me against the tow truck.

Rookies, taking control.

Bummer.

One cop walks to the van. The other one shakes me down. His eyes widen when he

sees the head of the weapon hanging from my neck. He turns to warn his partner. I double punch his temple. Lower him to the ground. The one at the van does a spin-around grab for his gun. Pulls it out. Aims it at my chest. One of the girls screams. He looks at the house. I leap. Take him to the pavement. I get up. He doesn't.

I carry both of them to the tow truck. Prop them up inside. They look like they're waiting for someone. They'll be okay.

The girls.

I'm inside the house in less than thirty seconds.

Drop to the floor. Peek into the room.

A big ass is staring at me.

Hooded, naked, with a straw at his nose, Vincent Bauer is bent over, sucking at a pile of white powder on the coffee table. His big, bare butt moves to the music. I ought to shoot him right now.

He snorts. A gag reflex. Almost coughs it up. Another snort. A swallow. It goes down. He smiles. Shakes his head from side to side. Feels his power. Howls, "Come to Daddy, little girls!"

The girls scream. I see them against the far wall. Bruised. Stiff statues. Going into shock. I might be too late for them.

The girls see me as I enter the room. Their swollen eyes follow me. A good sign. But first, I'll have to change the pecking order a little.

"Having fun, Maggot?" I ask in my bear's voice.

His fish-belly body jerks like he's been ice-picked in both ribs. His black hood snaps around. Cocaine covers the nose section. Shame in his eyes. He giggles, embarrassed. Wants to say something. Wants to explain things. His lips move. No words come out.

I hold his eyes with mine. Let him see what's in there. I show him my open hands, but he's still in my eyes. He looks away. Comes back. Looks away. Feints right. Runs left. Fast. Piston legs, powered by fear and cocaine.

I chase him. Not too close. Let him run. Let the girls see he's the rabbit now, not them.

Stereo speakers pump rhythm for his flight. I'm right behind him, taunting.

The girls watch us. Hands cover faces. Peeks between fingers. Fear-smiles of hope at the corners of their mouths.

He pulls ahead. Runs by the girls. Grabs Brittany. Spins to face me.

I keep coming.

His hand finds her small throat. Squeezes. Hope melts from her face.

"No. No. No," he says to me, shaking his head.

I stop.

He giggles. In command.

Brittany's eyes stare at me—dead now, like mine.

The Navy Seals Stealth Arrow Gun rolls out in a modified Queen Anne Salute. I pull the trigger.

Silently, the stainless steel broad head travels across the room at 500 feet per second, punches a 1.3" diameter hole in his forehead, pulling behind it a feathered, 16" aluminum shaft. The arrow impales his hooded head to the wall, just above the couch. One leg jerking. He doesn't scream when his foot breaks against the coffee table.

Brittany rolls into a ball. She stares at her stomach. Patty shake-screams away from me.

"I'm a police officer!" I shout the lie at them. "Get your clothes. Get dressed. Get out of here."

Patty stares at me, hands to her mouth, still screaming, no trust in her eyes. I can't blame her.

"Look out the window," I say, turning off the stereo. "There's my police car and a tow truck outside."

No trust.

"GO! Look out the window!"

Patty moves. Brittany doesn't.

Patty screams from the window, "There is a police car out there, Brit! There *really* is!"

Brittany doesn't hear her. She has gone to a safe place in her mind.

I've been there. You usually come back.

"Get dressed," I tell Patty. "The two of you go sit in my squad car. Lock the doors. Wait there."

Sniffing, wiping at her nose and eyes, she watches me work while she dresses.

I open Vincent Bauer's camcorder and pull out the cassette of the girls.

"What're you doing?" Patty asks.

"Making sure nobody ever sees this."

She helps her friend. Quiet. Thinking.

I pick up the cordless phone. Hit redial. Two rings. The wheezing tells me it's the right number.

"It's me," I say.

"Doesn't sound like you." The asthmatic.

"Kid kicked me in the throat." I force a laugh.

"Have you finished it?"

"Yeah. Done."

"I'm looking forward to seeing it."

I hang up.

The girls are dressed. They're both staring at Vincent Bauer. Patty turns to me. Tries to read my eyes. Comes up empty.

"You ain't no cop," she says. "You ain't, are you?"

I don't answer.

She puts an arm around Brittany. Draws her in. Whispers soft, warm words. Walks her to the door. Turns to me. Tiny hand touches my arm.

"Thanks," she says.

I try to smile. It doesn't come.

They walk out the door, older.

I pull my surveillance equipment and store it in the van. I open a large manila envelope, stuff in one of the three tapes I've made, along with a stack of information on Vincent Bauer. Drop it in the tow truck. The cop in the driver's seat is stirring.

I fire up the van. Patty waves to me from the police car. I pull alongside. She starts to say something. Doesn't. Lies back. Drops her eyes. Stares at her fingernails. She's learning.

I leave.

The soapy water at the car wash strips the dark blue tint from the van's white paint. I change the license plates. Add magnetic signs which say I'm a plumber.

Holiday Inn by the freeway. Check in. Open the cassette of the girls. Pull out the roll of film and let it uncoil into the bathroom sink. Plug the drain. Add sulfuric acid. Watch it boil. Take the empty cassette and pack it with Astrolite A-15 explosive. The firing mechanism is simple; when the video is played, the immediate area disappears.

I get the asthmatic's Omaha address from the computer, make out a label and box up the cassette. Walk out front and drop it in the mailbox.

He said he was looking forward to seeing it.

I dress in blue coveralls. Pony-tail my hair. Joe Average. Sun feels good as I slow-walk to the van.

Wipe my feet. Leave it all behind.

Tap into the computer for my next assignment.

El Paso, Texas. Never been there.

C. Gibson lives in Louisville, Kentucky.

Leonardo's Yarn:

a haphazard rug I removed to embellish
tugged from a closet just for some texture
I roll it out shyly and learn to relish
what this covering intends to conjecture
remembering it trod upon down on the floor
edges all frayed like my wild-haired youth
I hang it over the wall, inside by my door

I discard what I find all tight-patterned
strife—fine wood—plaster on lath
like Leonardo's skilled old pen turned
to sketching flawless reeds or water's path
images begging alone for some discordant bit
in need of bent reeds or rogue currents, life
a singular burning to keep the tunnel lit

—George H. Lea
Athens, Georgia

in the field

on the leafless tree
yellow apples being
like poetry
being

—Hugh Henneidy
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Moonlight

Surreal visions of immortality woven into silver halos.
Impressionistic images hanging cold and distant,
always out of reach,
but ever within sight.

No matter how many mediocre poets slander the name,
moonlight will keep its allure.
The mystique endures through memories,
memories we all have,
memories that mingle with fantasy, like paintings of myths,
our own personal myths of love and adventure,
where there is a glorious hero
with a face that is familiar,
as we glimpse it in the moonlight.

—Tracy Henley
Mississippi State, Mississippi

for Harold Von Horn

you have made
the turn
toward Paradise,
where light is pure
and Lord's love
all unchanging—
and we shall not
forget you

you were poet to us,
handler of words,
magician of phrases
cherisher of the beauties
of this world

you were master
of the craft
of caring

—Charles B. Tinkham
Hammond, Indiana

Threatened Summer Concerts

(Written for Ivan Galamian before his death)

Death has ruled my thoughts this entire year—
Not fear of death, fear of death the state,
But fear of death-process as trial by ordeal.
We all end as residents of that dread state;
Only how and when pose frightening questions.
Since concert series also exist in time,
I fear the deaths of those who move them,
But I know activities may also peak and die
While their prime movers enjoy good health,
And feel sufficiently vigorous, at least,
To lure new auditors if only they will cut
Their ties to loyalists who come not to hear
But to see and be seen, be heard and hear,
For many can scarcely suspend conversations
To give musical instruments a chance to sing.
Culture is always among threatened species
In danger of decapitalization. To survive,
It must contain the seeds of its own instruction.

—George Fullen
Schenectady, New York



Grandmother/Abuela

A somber requiem makes my spirit dazed today.
Funeral songs like poetry cradle me to tears.
Love is lost, for the moment, in a chaos of weeping.

The willow brings memories of Spring.
Our hearts, full of deceptions,
Create spells of sobbing.
Our ghosts dance for dreams.
Living is a cruel experience of reminiscing.

Today, at my grandmother's funeral,
I began to recollect.
I fought the attack of tears.
My mother was in despair
And grief unhinged my emotions.
The month of APRIL isn't
Only a month of showers
But of cruelties!!!

—Jesus A. Gutierrez
East Chicago, Indiana

In the Woods down the Street

In the swamp down the street
next to the woods where the old Slavic lady
tended her herbs and her flowers
a pond appears every March or April
with frogs and a pair of ducks

by May they've all disappeared
but violets cover
the patches of sunlight

later come blackberries
and changes of flowers right into November

once in a while I see a bloom
left over from the lady's garden
the only signs that her house was once there

folks still fish the polluted waters
the swans on Wolf Lake
don't know they're endangered

—John Sheehan
Gary, Indiana

Invisibility

Something
Very gently
Pulls me.

A thread,
Finer than cobweb.
I do not test its strength,

Or ask why it is attached.
Or where I am going.

Then suddenly,
I am
In your presence.

Safe,
I am no longer
Afraid.

—Christopher Mauch
Crown Point, Indiana



Ballerina

We have forgotten to
emerge from our cocoons and
like you (and Adam and Eve)
flutter and skim and,
glorying through air,
light on a moment.

—Dona Lu Goldman
Highland, Indiana

Spring Rites

I was a bulging April bulb,
due in two months
and walking for the health of it.
I was Mother Nature in a yellow dress,
blessing speckled eggs and tadpoles
with my secret mother's smile.

In Washington Park lewd
and lascivious squirrels chased
through chartreuse leaves.
Noon people came to watch with lunch,
their faces winter white.
Across the street, a young wife
hung with laundry.

I blessed a cemetery by mistake.
(Someone let forsythia camouflage the gate.)
I never meant to think of death
or watch a wrinkled woman plant geraniums
on a soldier's grave.
She looked up and smiled.

—Judy Washbush
Madison, Wisconsin

A silver snakeskin
Tangled in the rocks
The morning Dad died

—H. Batt
Buffalo, New York



Recluse: Spring

Within advancing mood
of afternoon
you move
slowly
toward me.

As we meet
in the narrow path,
you nod slightly,
silently,
move on,
bearing bright gifts
of the seasonal,
tiny buttercups,
tufts of purple clover;
a single
milk-white daisy.

—William Beyer
Belvidere, Illinois



Tripping the Sprinklers

Why did I think of you today,
In middle age, between the laundry
And a walk to the mailbox?
Was it the hint of after shave
On a shirt collar, the breeze
Tousling my hair, or the
Tentative spring sky that
Brought to mind your tease of a
Smile, your rangy tallness, and
Times tucked away like
Finery in pink tissue:

Dancing on the dunes at
Sunset, eating marshmallow
Sundaes without the nuts,
Sipping sloe gin and writing
On each other's back—
Top Ten on a transistor
Mugs stolen from A & W
The night we played tag on the
Golf course and tripped the sprinklers
Then made love, dripping wet,
In your yellow Carmenghia

Why, between the laundry and the
Mailbox, did I
Think of you today?

—Sally Nalbor
Crown Point, Indiana

THE HEALING

by
Linda Block Reitzes

Every Sunday for almost a year now, Mama, Beatrice Jean and I have sat in front of our TV set and prayed for one of God's miracles. We watch the Reverend Elston Boyd. He is an evangelist healer, and Mama says that if anyone can heal Beatrice Jean, it will be the Reverend Boyd who can do it.

"He has the gift from Jesus himself," Mama's told me many a time.

Mama sent \$19.95 to the Reverend for one of his prayer cloths, which has been blessed by his own hands. She keeps it folded in tissue paper on a shelf in the kitchen cabinet, next to the tomato soup.

Beatrice Jean sits with the prayer cloth over her head during the part of the program when the Reverend Boyd does the healing. It is made of a velvety material, and tickles the insides of her ears where I hold it. At first, Beatrice Jean was afraid to sit under the prayer cloth, but I told her to pretend it was a tent. She likes it better now.

Beatrice Jean peeks out of her tent to watch Mama pray. Mama doesn't know she's being watched because she prays with her eyes closed.

"Jesus, this is my Beatrice Jean. I named her that because it means 'she who brings joy'. And Jesus, this is a sweet, good child. She hasn't been able to hear since she was born, and she can't say but a few words like 'bye-bye' and 'ma-ma'. I even taught her to say your name, Lord. It don't sound too much like Jesus, but I'm sure you're listening just the same. We've been watching the Reverend Boyd, faithful, every Sunday, and I sent for a prayer cloth, which Beatrice Jean wears, but so far the healing hasn't happened. We're going to visit Reverend Boyd's Temple of Miracles in Akron, so Beatrice Jean can be blessed directly. Thank you, Lord. Amen."

I count to fifty as soon as the program is over and go to the door and wait. Beatrice Jean follows me with the prayer cloth still over her head.

Miss Eppie, from across the street, is on her way over to talk with Mama about the testimonials and healings that were on the

Reverend Boyd's show. Beatrice Jean and I would rather be outside playing jacks, but Mama likes us to be polite. Miss Eppie is very old, and doesn't get out much.

"Why, Lula and Beatrice Jean, how are ya'll this lovely Sunday afternoon?" Miss Eppie bends down in front of Beatrice Jean's face. She yells and moves her lips real careful. Beatrice Jean stares at the veins sticking out on Miss Eppie's neck.

Mama comes to the door and helps Miss Eppie into the living room.

"Lula, you and your sister may bring the refreshments," Mama says.

I go to the kitchen and put half a box of Chips Ahoy onto a flowered plate. Mama has made lemonade in a pitcher which I get from the icebox. Beatrice Jean climbs up on the counter and puts the prayer cloth back in the tissue paper.

Since I'm nine and Beatrice Jean is only five, I carry the lemonade and glasses in on a tray. Beatrice Jean takes in the cookie plate and napkins.

"It's the little ones that just break your heart," Miss Eppie was saying. "Did you see that little girl. . . the one whose head was so big she couldn't hardly hold it up? Looked like a poor wilted cabbage. What can anybody do for a poor little thing like that? I tell you, Loretta, it just breaks my heart."

"It's just pitiful," Mama says.

"Maybe it's wrong to say, Loretta, but at least your Beatrice Jean *looks* all right. Kind of cute, with that stick-straight hair and those freckles. To look at her, you wouldn't never know that she has an affliction," Miss Eppie says.

Beatrice Jean licks melted chocolate chips off her fingers. I wonder if she's read Miss Eppie's lips. I hope not, but I can't tell because she's looking down at her hands.

"I've been wanting to take Beatrice Jean to the Temple of Miracles for a long time now," Mama says. "But we just haven't had the means since—"

"I know, child, I know," Miss Eppie says.

Mama hasn't been herself since Daddy got killed in the mine two years ago. The

company said it was an accident and they were real sorry. Mama got some insurance money. She said Daddy would have wanted her to use it for a healing on Beatrice Jean.

"I just know the Lord has good things in store for you, Loretta. You certainly have had more than your share of misery," Miss Eppie says. "Why, I had the arthrititis so bad, I couldn't hardly move. . . joints was all bent up and hurting."

"I sent off for one of the Reverend's special bless cloths and wore it to bed every night for a week," Miss Eppie continues. "I prayed to Jesus to help me, and now I'm healed. Praise the Lord."

Beatrice Jean tugs on my sleeve. She's been sitting here as long as she can stand to and wants to go outside. I look over at Mama.

"Let the children go on out, Loretta. Too pretty to keep them inside all day," Miss Eppie says.

I get my jacks and ball and put them and two cookies in my dress pocket. Beatrice Jean stands in front of Mama waiting for a kiss. Mama always kisses us on a special place on the top of the head where the bangs and the part come together. Mama's kiss feels like the sun does when I sit outside in one place too long.

I grab my red baseball cap, which I know Beatrice Jean is crazy to wear, and I stick it on her head. It's too big for her and her ears stick out from under it. Miss Eppie's eyes follow us all the way out the door.

The Temple of Miracles turned out to be a big tent, like the kind the circus puts up every year when it comes to town. There were rows and rows of folding chairs. They had roped off a place just for people in wheelchairs and on crutches. They filled the rows clear up to aisle M.

When Beatrice Jean first saw those people, she put her hands over her eyes and pushed her head against Mama's arm. Mama told us that the doctors had given up on them and now it was only the Reverend Boyd and Jesus who could help.

Up on the stage, a lady was playing the

organ. Four men dressed in dark blue suits came out and lined up next to each other. They sang "How Can You Refuse Him Now?"

Mama looked so happy. Her eyes were closed and she was smiling like she was lit from the inside.

How can you re-fuse Him now?
How can you re-fuse Him now?
How can you turn away from His side?
With tears in His eyes,
On the cross there He died.
How can you re-fuse Je-sus now?

Mama put her arm around Beatrice Jean and brought the music to her with the sway of her body.

...as they nailed His hands,
He cried, 'They don't understand,'
As the blood flowed from His side.

Beatrice Jean didn't see Reverend Boyd when he came out. She was trying to get the scuff marks off her shoes. She put spit on her finger and rubbed it into the chalky white shoe polish, but all that did was make a bigger mess. Mama gave her a nudge and she looked up at the stage.

Reverend Boyd stood dead in the center of the stage and looked out at the audience. Everyone sat still in his seat. Then, the Reverend jerked his head back and stared up at the ceiling. When he brought it down again, he shouted,

"You can have a *mir-a-cle*! I said, you can have a *mir-a-cle*! If you believe what I'm telling you, I want you to say, 'A-men.' I can't *hear* you, neighbors. I said, if-you-believe-that-Jesus-can-save-you, say 'A-men!'"

Everybody said "A-men" at the same time. Beatrice Jean just sat there and watched Reverend Boyd, her eyes wide.

I was used to seeing Reverend Boyd in black and white, so it was a surprise to see him in a baby-blue suit. His shirt was baby blue with ruffles down the front. He had on a tie with stripes—red and baby blue.

"You out there that are afflicted by the demons of al-co-hol and tobacco. . .those of you who are dope fiends. . .Jesus *sees* you. He knows you have fallen, and need His blessed hand to help you *up*! Let Him *lift* your burden! Take His hand, *right now*!"

The Reverend did a kind of dance. He put his hands on his hips and sashayed back and forth across the stage. He pointed his finger and shook it at me. He looked up toward heaven and rolled his eyes.

"It's so easy to love Je-sus. Oh, I love Him, I love Him, I love Him. I'm *full* of the

love of Je-sus! Throw away those crutches. . .you won't need them when you have Jesus! Bless His precious name. The lame shall walk. The deaf shall hear. The sick in body and spirit shall be healed. You *can* have a *mir-a-cle*! Reach out and *touch* Him, you that are unsaved. *Feel* Jesus! Let Him into year hearts! Glo-ry hal-le-lu-jah!"

"Hal-le-lu-jah," Mama said.

Beatrice Jean was watching the lady sitting in front of me. She had on a hair-net and curlers and was rocking back and forth in her chair. I wasn't real sure that she wouldn't end up in my lap. Mama said that curlers didn't belong in the Lord's house.

"And now, neighbors, it's testimonial time," Reverend Boyd said.

A lady with her little girl, who looked to be about three or four, came out from the left side of the stage and stood in front of Reverend Boyd. Two of the men who had sung came out with them and stood off to the side.

The little girl had on a pink-and-white checked dress and a pink bow in her curly blond hair. Reverend Boyd reached out to touch her, and she shinnied up her mother and hung on tight around her neck.

I looked at Beatrice Jean's shoes again and wondered if she was too messy for Jesus and Reverend Boyd to bother with.

"Well, who do we have here, today?" Reverend Boyd asked.

"Reverend Boyd, this is my little girl, Alma, and I'm her mother, Mrs. Eddie Simpson. I've brought Alma here to show to all your audience the glory of Jesus."

"Hal-le-lu-jah, Mrs. Simpson," Reverend Boyd said. "Did Jesus give you a miracle, precious?"

The lady gave her little girl a pinch on her arm and she looked up long enough to nod her head.

"Yes, sir, He did give us a miracle, praise-His-holy-name," Mrs. Simpson said. "My little girl was born with a right foot that was twisted in, all the way down from her leg. The doctors said she would have to wear a cast for a long time and then a brace, and even then there wasn't no guarantee that her foot would right itself."

"No guarantee. . .from the doctors. But Jesus gave you a guarantee, didn't He?"

"That's right, Reverend Boyd. And that wasn't all that was wrong with Alma."

The little girl was sucking her thumb. Every once in a while she'd peek at Reverend Boyd and turn back to her mother's

neck.

"She had a small windpipe that would close on her every so often," Mrs. Simpson said. "She couldn't hardly breathe. The doctors told us that when Alma got older they were going to go in and open up her little throat."

Reverend Boyd shook his head back and forth. "And what did Jesus do for you?"

"Well, Reverend Boyd, I prayed real hard to Jesus to help us and three weeks ago, I came to your Holy Ghost Rally, and you blessed Alma. You asked Jesus to help her. We were sitting right out there in your audience, and something just passed all through this child."

"Praise the Lord!" Reverend Boyd said.

"Praise the Lord. Ever since then, Alma has been walking normal and her throat hasn't closed on her again. And I thank Jesus for giving us a miracle," Mrs. Simpson said.

"A little, crippled foot and a small windpipe and Jesus cured you. Honey, why don't you show these folks how good you can walk now?" Reverend Boyd said.

The little girl held on to her mother's hand when she put her down. She was still sucking her thumb when they walked off the stage. Mama was clapping and crying.

I was hoping to see some miracles happen. I wanted to see those people in wheelchairs get up and walk free. I figured that the people with crutches would throw them down and rise up and be healed. Mama said that sometimes it happens right off, and sometimes the healing takes a few days to show up.

I think that's what must have happened because I only saw one man try to get up from his wheelchair, but then he sat down again. I sure wish I could have been around when the healing finally took.

After the testimonials, Reverend Boyd called for sinners to come forward and take their healings. A lot of sinners came up to the stage, but only a few got to go up the stairs and be touched by the Reverend. The rest of them stayed at the edge of the stage and took Jesus in through his prayers over them.

When Reverend Boyd called for children with afflictions, Mama got up fast and pulled us to the steps leading up to the stage. This one little boy, he was blind, got to the Reverend before us. His parents took him up the steps and onto the stage. Rev-



erend Boyd walked over to meet them.

"I can feel the warmth of Je-sus flowing from my hands right into this boy's eyes," Reverend Boyd said.

His healing didn't take right then because his mother and father had to help him off the stage.

Soon, it came Beatrice Jean's turn. She looked down at her shoes while Mama told Reverend Boyd what was wrong with her. I felt like my stomach was going to come up on me.

Reverend Boyd put his hand under Beatrice Jean's chin. I half expected her to climb up Mama, just like that other little girl, but she stood there and made herself look at him.

His face had make-up on it; it was pink, and cakey, and smeared from the sweat running off him.

"Now, sugar, don't you be afraid of Reverend Boyd. I'm here to help you feel the healing power of Jesus Christ. He's going to open up your little ears and make you whole."

Reverend Boyd held his hands over Beatrice Jean and closed his eyes. Then he grabbed hold of her head and put one hand over each of her ears and pressed them hard.

"Out, deaf spirit! In the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. . .out! Amen! This child is getting a miracle!" He clapped his hands at one ear, then the other.

"Can you say, 'Thank you, Jesus'?" he asked.

Beatrice Jean held on to Mama's dress and stood there looking at Reverend Boyd's lips stretch out over his teeth. They were little yellow squares, all the same size.

"Now, I want you to say, 'Thank you, Jesus,'" Reverend Boyd said.

Beatrice Jean watched his lips form "Jesus" again.

"Say 'Je-sus,' Beatrice Jean," Mama said.

Then, Reverend Boyd reached over Beatrice Jean and put his hand on Mama's forehead.

"You have been carrying a heavy burden, but now, Jesus is going to *lift* it!" On the word "lift," Mama fell over backwards like a chopped-down tree.

Those two men who had sung were standing by to catch Mama. A lady ran on stage with a piece of cloth to put over Mama's legs, which had spread apart when she went down.

Beatrice Jean started crying "ma-ma" as loud as she could.

"Listen to that, folks, she can *talk*! Give Jesus a big hand," Reverend Boyd said.

I didn't know where to look first. There was Mama lying on the floor, passed out cold in back of me, and in front of me was Beatrice Jean, who was trying to hit Reverend Boyd for what he had done to Mama.

The lady at the organ started pumping her legs in a fury. I couldn't make out what she was playing, but it was getting louder.

Reverend Boyd had caught Beatrice Jean's arms and held them down at her side. She began yelling "Shee-sus" over and over until she saw Mama get up.

While we were being helped off the stage, I passed the lady at the organ. The fat on her arms shook in time to "Shall We Gather By The River."

Mama got a healing that day. She said that she had been "slain in the spirit."

"When the Reverend Boyd asked Jesus to help me, I got so filled up with the Holy Ghost, I just couldn't stand up no more," she told me.

I'm not sure I understand what Mama means, but I do know one thing—Mama's looked different since that day the Reverend touched her. Her eyes are like a deer's I saw one time in the woods. . .wild, and shiny and scared.

Beatrice Jean still can't hear. Her healing didn't take. She thinks it's because Reverend Boyd and Jesus are mad at her. Mama keeps trying to tell her that isn't true. Mama says that Reverend Boyd and Jesus love us all.

Well, I hope that's so, but now, on Sundays, when Mama turns on the Reverend Boyd, Beatrice Jean keeps her eyes closed the whole time underneath the prayer cloth.

L. Reitzes lives in New York, New York.

Untitled

What happens to
the shy people?
Do they become
bold and shock
all of us
Or never change
crawl into a corner
and hide
Or find each other
and fall in love
and never speak
Or do they fall in love
crawl into a corner
and shock each other

—Jim Bakken
Chesterton, Indiana

Fragile Legacy

(In memory of Thurgood Marshall)

Bearing the torch of equality,
you forged a path in the darkness
so that others could see.

Relentless in the pursuit of right,
you and Martin committed your lives
to a powerful movement begat
of Rosa's fierce courage.

To the people, Martin spoke of peace;
to the black-robed men on high,
you spoke of justice.

Tenacious in your goals, you shouted:
“‘Separate, but equal,’ is *not* equal!”
Archaic laws of the land were abolished
and doors of learning were opened.

Your journey having ended,
there remains a haunting void
lingering in the hallowed halls of justice.

To whom have you bequeathed
your black robes?
To whom have you passed
the torch?

—Kathleen McCarthy Kozuch
Griffith, Indiana

January 29, 1986

In a roll of flame and smoke, heaven
on fire, the seven
exploded into their souls.

To carry fire as though it were a flower,
Clampitt extolled.
Is this horror a bud blooming?

The morning newspaper's lurid landscape
traces the gamut
from holocaust through sports.

Even a comic strip character
dies of overdose.
Say it ain't so, Trudeau!

Catastrophe and comics, horror and sports.
And Grace's eyes.
We mourn this morning's message.

Bless the seven.

—Robert Funge
San Carlos, California

“Every little breeze

is calling. . . .”
I sing, then hum
da dum, da dum dum,
the words long gone.
But my feet remember
the sweet fast
jazz. They dance
step-step-kick
to one side
then the other. . . .
so many partners ago.
I keep swinging
around my living room
to the bouncy,
staccato beat.
Umm, that clarinet!
Its mellow tones
from African
impingo wood,
its rhythm, African
via New Orleans. . . .

The music stops,
saying, “at sundown.”
I feel the warm cling
of a partner,
feel the harmony of
life playing on.

—Dorothy Harrington
Los Angeles, California

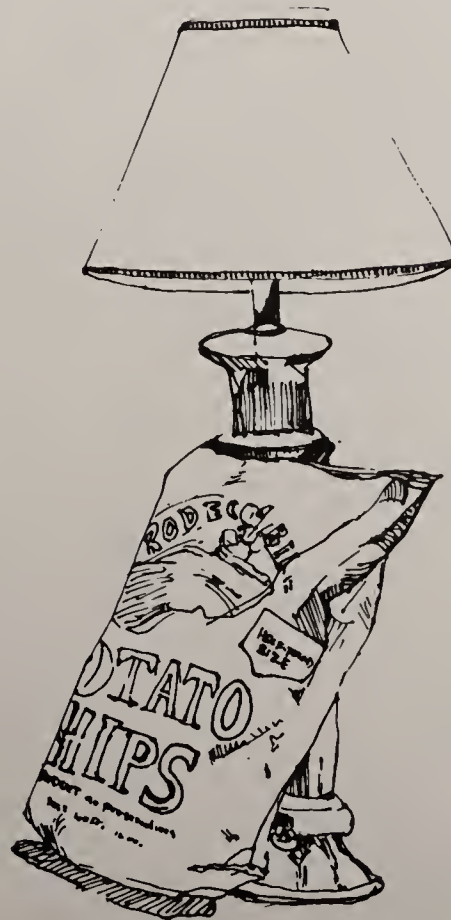
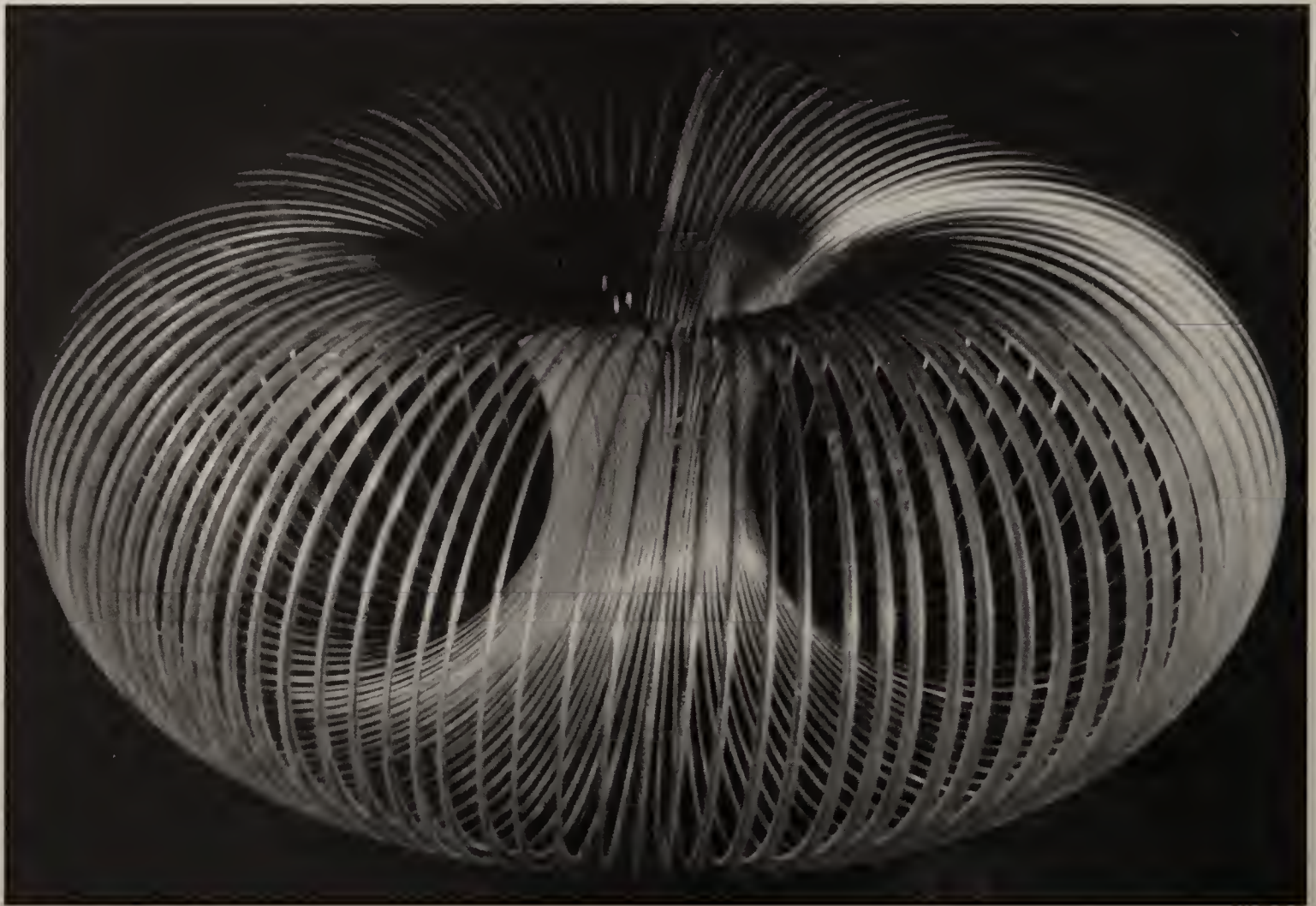


Illustration by Mary Smith Chant





Photographs by award-winning
photographer, James Madison



Involving Chant

The morning opens roses,
in your face outside the sense
of clocks, surreal assonance
subtracting entropy of hours.

Between the sheets of sleep, hands
unsighted and kinetic, paralleled
like panther paws unclawed
in naked latency.

Morning showers lesson unlaved
bones, black rain bullets
dissolve the lift of birds,
dew-delicate, their wing-cry.

Night added us, fastfalling.
Like stoneborn watercircles we became increase.
Edge-collected, we went home to music,
and mirrors could not solve our image.

—Ben Passikoff
Flushing, New York

Shadows

Flames from the fire
place jump among the logs,
lick the stone and
shine on the dark walls.

At the desk under
candlelight, the
ancient man sits
crumpled in his chair

with a quill in his
craggy hand. He calls
out through the shadows.
A sheet of paper is

pulled from a drawer and
he begins scratching words—
the old hound lies down
at his master's feet.

The glass being stirred
with a metal spoon
can be heard in the
kitchen down the hall.

—Mick Kennedy
Clarksville, Indiana

for Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix

“All along the watchtower”
friends want your poems
got to steal your bliss
damn your enthusiasm
within the soft hissing winds of rain
blowing over lavender fields of phlox
woodpeckers racket
all of the tin
chimneys round

—Robert Schuler
Menomonie, Wisconsin

The Leash

Closing my eyes never works—
each pore has an eye that
opens to your touch.
Each moment, you are memorized.
Memory plays us—
a harp in a long-closed restaurant.
I sat there once
eating olives at the bar.
I listened for your voice
between the harpist's chords.
I heard your lips
come together.
I turned and watched you
eat honeydew
losing myself in teeth, tongue, melon.
Inside you, the world
was chained to itself.
The ocean smelled pure.
The air breathed me.
All of your life lolled in the sun.
I wanted to find your pain,
pull it to sweetness and eat it.
Each eye opened
remembering music
almost music.

—Dana Curtis
Denver, Colorado

Dearest, Did You Hear?

The night was a black sun
Casting shadows of a past
On virgin snow,
While moon was a pale nun
Whispering behind veils
To celibate stars
Nodding off at their prayers;
Yet your tangerine hair
Sequined in ballet of
Pistils of light where you lay
Like a flower
Glazed in a tomb of ice.

The trees
Were all naked in the park
Like a nude army
Petrified on the march,
And, in between,
Your beauty peeped
—A snowdrop at their feet.
The miller of clouds
Was busy grinding
His frozen flying flour,
In the breeze fluttering
Its swan's wing
Across iced cake of lake.

What sounds' snowflakes
Were you sighing in your dream?
What did they mean?
That you loved me?
No, the words were but phantoms,
Because your lips were sealed
(Like that ancient tomb
Where the dark angel rolled
His great closing stone)
In spite of my prayer.
Dearest, did you hear
In the blizzard of my heart
That wolf howling at the stars?

—Jonathan Russell
Port Chester, New York

Photo by Kathleen Pucalik



A VERY SPECIAL ARTS' VOLUNTEER

by
Patricia Wilson

The sounds of laughter and music filled the room as the young girl from the West Lake Special Education Cooperative rolled across the computer-controlled keyboard as she sat in her wheelchair. I stood and watched as she became thrilled by the experience. Her wonder was infectious and I couldn't keep myself from smiling at her joy.

As the students entered the classroom, Ed Zivich greeted them while strumming on his banjo. Zivich shared with the Franklin youngsters from East Chicago the history of the instrument. The students joined in a rousing song fest even though some were unfamiliar with the melodies. Not knowing the songs, however, didn't stop the toe-tapping or the enjoyment of the experience.

As the boys and girls from Franklin Elementary School of Hammond sat in a circle, Artist Nicole Boller gave them the instructions needed for their first experience in doing scratch art. While the children focused on drawing circles, squares and other designs, the desired colors of green, blue, pink and yellow appeared on the otherwise black sheets of paper.

Playing a computer-controlled keyboard, listening to banjo music and learning scratch art are just a smattering of examples that the students who came to the Very Special Arts Program experienced

that spring day. Every May, for the past five years, students, artists and volunteers have filled the corridors and classrooms of Purdue University Calumet with music, drama, singing, and dancing. In addition, the university's buildings have been used for drawing and painting.

With the current cutbacks of art in the school systems, this type of program is much more important now. In 1988, Barbara Meeker, a former PUC instructor, introduced the Very Special Arts Program to the Hammond community. According to Meeker, the program is to "facilitate learning through the arts." The program is an educational affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The Very Special Arts Indiana Festival is a partnership between Very Special Arts Indiana (VSAI) and Indiana Bell, the corporate sponsor.

VSAI is a cooperative program between Purdue University Calumet, East Chicago Public Schools, Hammond Public Schools, and West Lake Special Education Cooperative.

Indiana has been a leader in the encouragement of this program. Involvement benefits the community. Also, businesses have the opportunity to provide financial support while a personal volunteer effort provides the man power.

The program has been growing stron-

ger each year. This year's coordinators were Julie Volkmann and Kathrene Wales. Artists from the fields of dance/movement, drama, music and the visual arts gave their services along with a crew of volunteers, of which I am one.

A few years ago, I saw a sign on a Purdue bulletin board announcing the need for helpers for the program. My antenna went into gear. I have a fault. (Or, is it an asset?) I volunteer. I have found such great joy in volunteering that I can't imagine not doing it. And at this event, just seeing the joy of the children and seeing the interest that the artists take in instructing them makes volunteers such as myself realize that this is a worth-while endeavor. The need for volunteers, in this or in any other program, is ever present and I'm glad I can help.

I urge those who don't have this type of program in their community to investigate the possibility of having one started. I realize that I just speak as a helper. But I feel that at any level this endeavor is worth-while.

At the Very Special Arts Program at PUC, children can come to learn and appreciate the various aspects of art. Who knows? This type of experience may stimulate them into becoming artists in future years.

P. Wilson lives in Hammond, Indiana.

MEMORIES OF NONNA

By
Nancy Coppolillo-Conner

My grandparents owned a two-flat house on the south side of Chicago, and I spent some of the best days of my childhood there. I remember the afternoon breeze of hot summer days blowing through the opened kitchen window, the curtains billowing in the air, as grandma talked in dialect with her lady friends. My mother would serve cake and coffee as these ladies sat around the kitchen table and reminisced about the country of their birth. As I sat in my chair in the corner by the stove and slowly ate my delicious piece of cake, I listened as Nonna spoke of the beauty of Italy—of the apricots, figs and chestnuts picked fresh from the trees.

We had many other family traditions, too. A favorite of mine was spending Sunday afternoons with my grandparents. We gathered in the tiny kitchen—my cousins, aunts, uncles and me. With the wonderment of a child, I watched and listened as they talked, laughed, and argued—partly in their native Italian dialect from the Province of Calabria, and partly in English.

When we arrived, we always found grandma cooking—no matter what time it was. I remember huge metal pots of tomato sauce simmering on her kitchen stove. I could smell the aroma of blended spices as soon as I opened the back door. Nonna served spaghetti in special bowls piled high with huge, perfectly shaped meatballs and delicious sausages. She always prepared enough food for the entire family and any other guests that may have stopped by. She was a good cook, my Nonna, not fancy, but very creative. Everything was homemade and fresh from grandpa's gar-

den or purchased from the peddler who drove his produce wagon down the street each week.

The holidays were also a special time for my grandparents. I would sit in my favorite chair in Nonna's kitchen and watch as she, my mother and my great aunt, Zia Carmella, would put on their aprons, wash and dry their hands, and then turn pounds of flour into delicious Christmas cookies. One special cookie they made with my grandpa's red wine. And we couldn't possibly have had a Happy Easter, *Buona Pasqua*, without homemade Italian sausage, prepared especially for the Easter breakfast *frittata*. Of course, that called for another family gathering at Nonna's, because only she could properly season the meat, just right, to taste. And she never measured her ingredients. She just added a handful of this and a pinch of that.

There was never a boring moment at my grandparents' house. I had many cousins, aunts, and uncles, so someone was always available for me to talk to or play with. Sometimes, my cousin Theresa and I would move the furniture in the tiny living room, turn on the radio, and dance and dance and dance—until we were dizzy and exhausted. In the summer, we would sit outside on the front porch or play in the gangway. And I loved to pick the figs off grandpa's tree in the backyard.

She was good and kind, my Nonna. Born and bred to the traditions of southern Italy, she was the true family matriarch. Compassion and generosity were her endearing virtues. Now after all of these years, I have questions to ask her. As a child, I felt she would always be there, in her kitchen, cooking something special, or

sitting in her favorite chair waiting for us to arrive.

I look now in my mother's box of old family pictures—black and white photos of family gatherings at my grandparents' house. I pick up one photo and hold it in my hand. I study the faces of my aunts, uncles, cousins, and godparents. They are all gathered around the table, all holding a glass of grandpa's homemade wine, all toasting the birth of a new baby. As my mother cut the cake, everyone was smiling—happy—content.

I have always known that my grandparents came from the Province of Calabria, but now I want to know more. Did they arrive at Ellis Island? If so, what year? The only way I could answer my questions was to do some genealogical research. First, I went to the library and read up on genealogy. I found out who to write to and what forms were needed in order to obtain copies of Naturalization Papers and a Ship's Passenger List. I then wrote to the National Archives in Washington and asked them to send me a variety of forms. But in order to fill out the forms properly, I needed to know the name of the village where my grandparents were born. I called my cousin Theresa. She had once lived upstairs from my grandparents. I asked her if she knew the name of the village from which they came.

"You know, I don't remember the name of the town," she replied. "But I think my mother would. I do remember grandma wrapping packages for my mother and me to take to the post office for her during the war. She was always sending something to Italy."

So I called Theresa's mother, my Aunt



Illustration by Cheryl D. Uhl

Ella, and asked her if she remembered the name of the village. "Altomonte," she said. "I would address the packages that she would send to her family during World War II. Yes, Altomonte is the name of the village, just outside the city of Cosenza, in the Province of Calabria."

I thanked her and immediately began to fill out the forms. I sent them off to Washington and waited impatiently for a response. When I came home from work a few weeks later, my husband met me at the door.

"You'll never believe what arrived in the mail," he said.

To my surprise, I found copies of my grandparents' naturalization papers sitting on the kitchen table. I was elated. I sat down and began to read the documents carefully. A small photo of Nonna and Nonno appeared on their respective papers.

Now I'm beginning to put the pieces

together, to put the history of my ancestry in order. I hope some day to go to the city of Cosenza in Calabria, to the mountain village of Altomonte, and touch the earth that nurtured the seed that created my family.

Just recently, after spending a day with my father on the south side of Chicago, I decided to drive past Nonna's house. I had often wondered who lives there now. What children were climbing the back steps up to the balcony that looked out across the neighborhood, and who was playing in the back yard? Was there still a vegetable garden, like grandpa's, with tomato plants—tall as a child—and zucchini, eggplant, green peppers, and basil? I was full of wonder! I drove up in front of the house. As I looked out my car window, a myriad of memories flooded my mind. I got out of the car and slowly walked past the front of the house, then around to the side. I leaned on the gate and looked down the gangway, into the back yard.

I saw grandpa working in his garden. He was wearing a long-sleeved shirt, as always, and dark trousers held up by suspenders. The afternoon sun was warm and hung heavily in the clear blue sky. Holding the garden hoe in one hand, he stopped and pulled a bandanna from his back pocket. He removed his wide-brimmed straw hat and then wiped his brow. A small child, wearing a bright yellow sundress, was playing in the back yard. Her long dark hair was pulled back into a ponytail with a matching yellow ribbon. The child reached up and pulled a fig from the lowest branch of the tree.

Then I heard someone call, "Nunzia, Nunzia." The little girl stopped playing and hurried to the back door. I smiled, turned away, and walked slowly back to my car.

N. Coppolillo-Conner lives in Highland, Indiana.

Finding My Voice

After Twilight

the pale moon rising
over pleated hills
the sky exposing
its dark distances
the fractured
light of stars. . .
and above the small
intimate sounds of earth
a breeze soft
as the sigh of angels.

—Dawn Zapletal
Millbrae, California

Late Night Drive

Driving the Borman
I puff a big cigar,
Brown and pungent. . .
Window open
Summer breeze blowing
I smell fresh-cut grass
That battles burning tobacco.

Roscoe in the back
Smiles a puppy smile
Happy to be riding
In the early hours
Of a starlit morning.

Riding the Calumet
A love song drifts from speakers
As smoke drifts from my cigar
As thinking drifts to girls I've known
To friends I had
Another life
Long ago.

Cruising Lake Shore Drive
Architects' dreams sparkling on my left,
Seem like a poster; can't be real.
The Lake's inky blackness on my right
Absorbing all light
Like an earth-bound black hole.

I turn my car to head back home
Thoughts of work and music and warm night air
Trying hard not to think
Of being alone.

—David Dal Santo
Griffith, Indiana

I was a beached whale gasping for life
On the deserted beach of searching for me.
My wounds were not deep, but only a series
Of shallow stabbings of soul neglect.

People came round and poked me with
Their life plans, to see if I
Would fit in. They were just out
For their Sunday strolls.

Someone called for my rescue, saying,
“We only want to help you.” Taken to
Their healing tank, I vaguely longed
For my abandoned sea of self.

When put on display, I did tricks
For my captors for years. This was
How I learned to survive, yet I
Always heard the wailing inside me.

Gradually I knew my freedom lay in
Living on the bottom of the life tank
Until my own voice could be heard—
Whose roar now is impossible to silence.

—Patrice Wylie
Tucson, Arizona

Pause

The hills sleep
with mist hanging over them
as if to contemplate.
The trees stand still
trying to decide
and the birds wait.
Chairs, belligerent as usual,
each face in
different directions
while we pace to and fro
gnashing over choices
hacking at
possibility.

—Ray Greenblatt
Paoli, Pennsylvania

Through the Trees

That ride along Route 9
by Breezy Bend in Spencer—
when the trees are new in leaf
and the wind down,
I see a blister on the skyline,
the summit of Monadnock,
a good day's drive away.

And once, on the road to Country Montessori,
I watched Gyp and Dandy, tawny Belgians,
gaze from an alfalfa field, gaze easy
through the nick in a stand of alders.

Our eyes held steady, hawsered to the moment
just before fog.

Thursday afternoons, taut slices of the week,
old ghosts up attic tend their allotments.
Bright as scalpels, they slice through my line
of vision,
then file out the skylight
with a feline sort of grace.

Like the pin of a well-oiled Luger
snapping into place.

—Mary Driscoll
Millbury, Massachusetts

I've Held You Close Against The Night

I've held you close against the night
A silent vigil keeping.
In troubled dreams I held you tight
And kissed you softly sleeping.

I've listened to each breath so warm
And gazed overcome with wonder
Upon the gentle, muse-like form
Of an angel caught in slumber.

I've trembled at your gentle touch,
Kissed lips as sweet as rain.
I've whispered into honey hair
Your endearing, precious name.

In eyes so fair I took delight,
Brushed skin as soft as heather.
And if the sun should cease to shine so bright,
Or the earth and moon be severed,
I'll hold you close against the night
And vow to love thee ever.

—Jeremy Kryt
Munster, Indiana

Can Wait

I can wait until
the pipes ice up, and crack,
until the shoe brings terror
to the foot.
I can wait until
you up and dance,
until you burn the monkeys
in the barbecue,
bring home a gay young man
with shining eyes
who somersaults to work.
I can wait until your nails
rip down my back
like a lycanthrope
attacking his first nightgown,
until your linebacker pin-ups
come down one by one.
I can wait until you tell me that I cook
like Mendelssohn,
or until you covet not
your neighbor's satellite.
I can wait until you die
or know that you depend on me,
whichever's first.

—jack shadoian
Amherst, Maine

Islands in the Stream

We are moss-covered
tiny islands in a stream
of churning, surging humanity
eddy fast or whirling slow
moving everlastingly
to the sea

How does it matter
how fast we go?
Leaping, tearing, tumbling
over ferns that grow
or meandering, murmuring. . . .
gentle, slow?

For rushing on against
the relentless sands of time
In the end we are
but moss and slime. . . .

Covering another island
in another stream
in another place
in another time

—Angelee
Chandigarh, India
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“Source”

She is legato.
I am staccato.
Her leg unfolds in a fluid *développé*.
My leg unbends in a wobbly extension.
Her arm curves through *porte de bras*.
My arm is jointed as I change its position.
She hovers through every movement, every turn, every leap, every
pause.
I rush from point to point to point, always in transition, never
completing, never expressing.
The music fuses with her body and seems to come from within her
soul.
I strive to hear the melody over the clamor of my mind reminding
me of each coming step and gesture.
Her *rélevé* lifts her, toe touching, body and soul soaring, when she
dances she is taken where the floor cannot own her.
I *rélevé*, and I push against a force that claims me, holds me, pulls
me down where I belong and I yield.
To dance is her life.
I would give my life to dance.

—Annie Young
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

TO BE LOVED

by
Russell T. Kinkade

Between the twin peaks of the far mountains the winter sun winked its farewell for the day, and the village in the valley snuggled under the comforter of night. The lamp lighter lit the last of the street lamps, then pulled up his collar against a biting wind. An old couple, he in a thick seaman's coat and she in a sheepskin coat and a shawl over her head, hurried out of the cold into a tidy home with a waiting hearth where they would build a welcome fire. A tired, thin dog trotted into an alley and found shelter in a doorway.

Fluffy flakes began to fall upon the village houses, their windows lit by candle-light like pumpkins on Halloween. No one walked the few streets now, and the roads to the surrounding farms were empty. Softly, there flowed over the village the sound of a woman's singing with that of a children's chorus. The *a cappella* choral chant with soprano solo came from the small church at the edge of the village.

In their homes men sat before blazing log fires and sipped steins of lager. Women knitted and rocked in rocking chairs near their men. Large family Bibles sat on hand-made tables. The couples listened to the music from the church and waited for the return of their children.

Brahms' *Wiegenlied* faded into the still night. Then the church door flew open, disturbing the peace, and thirty small feet tramped down the wooden steps of the church. The children raced to homes and hugs and kisses.

Two of the children, boys of ten and seven, stopped before a curiosity shop and peered intently at hand-carved carriages, replicas of houses, toy animals, and, above all, the wonderfully detailed dolls.

"I want the boy with the red cheeks," the seven-year-old said.

"Oh, Hans, that doll would be good for you because you are young," the ten-year-old said, "but I want the carriage with the liveryman and the six prancing horses."

"Christian, you ask too much," Hans

said emphatically. "Father cannot afford so many pieces."

Just then the door of the curiosity shop creaked open and there appeared from the darkness within an ancient dwarf.

"Good evening, boys," he said softly. "Would you like to come in and see the pretty dolls?"

The dwarf's head upon his thick neck was a great white globe with onyx eyes. Wisps of hoary hair stuck out from the top of his head as if he had been struck by lightning. His hands had long strong fingers with calluses on the tips, and his stout frame was bulwarked by legs which were like tree stumps.

The boys backed away quickly from the shop and the dwarf. They whirled, grabbed hands, and ran, shouting behind them, teasingly, as boys are wont to do, "Troll. Troll. You'll not carve us into your dolls."

The dwarf looked after the boys, and the light of a street lamp reflected from the tears on his cheeks. He stepped back inside his shop and in the darkness found his way, without stumbling, to his work bench. Lifting the glass chimney of an oil lamp, he

lit the wick. He picked up a partly carved pony of white pine and a carving knife. With deftness, he whittled at a tiny hoof.

Soon his hands began to tremble and he set his work down. He bowed his head. "I...I wish I could reverse the magic," he said to no one but himself. "Then I could be a wondrous wooden doll a child would hold and love instead of this ugly flesh they run from in fear." He blew out the lamp and went to a rocking chair near a window looking out over the silent forest.

He slept.

In the night sky clouds parted and a star twinkled and pondered the dwarf's wish. A brilliant shaft of light shot down from the star and entered through the window before which the dwarf slept. Suddenly, the entire room was radiant with light.

The dwarf, startled, jumped up on his stubby legs. One was tingling with needles of sleep and he stumbled against a wall. He shook his leg and rubbed his eyes, then opened them slowly. The light became subdued, and the dwarf saw the room as on a clear summer day.

"Who? What?" the dwarf called.

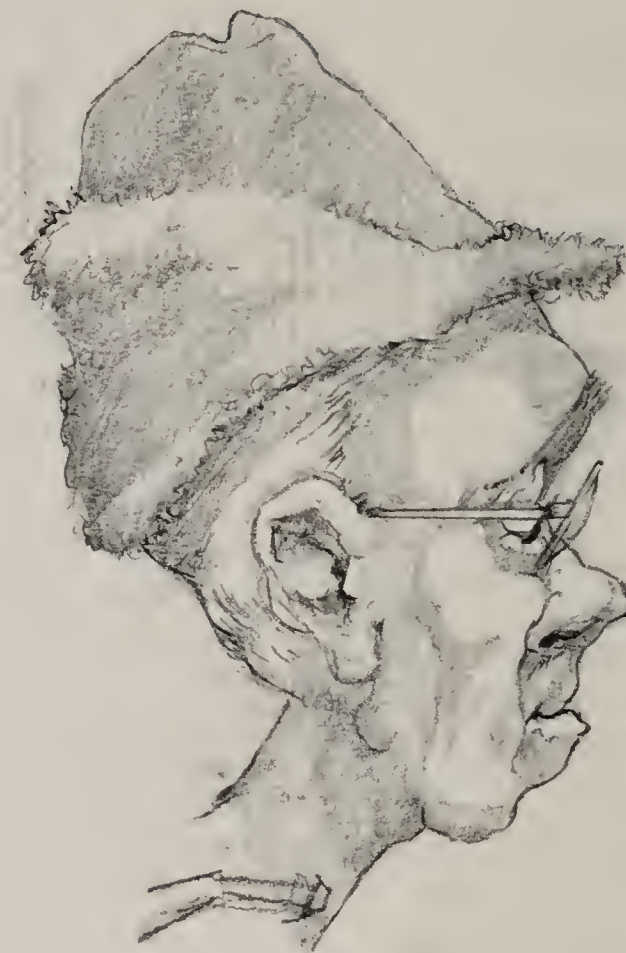


Illustration by Cal Barber

A voice, at once before him and at the same time all around him, answered: "I have come to grant your wish."

"My wish?" The dwarf tottered to the center of the room, looking around, but he saw no one.

"To be," the voice said, "a wondrous wooden doll for a child to love. That was your wish, wasn't it?"

The dwarf ran fingers over the wrinkles of his face and felt stiffness in his back. He thought of all the taunts and jeers he had suffered because of his ugliness.

In response to these thoughts, the voice said, "Do not give much weight to the gibes of children which fall so easily from their lips. Do not be offended by children's teasing."

But the dwarf was lost in his dream. "You mean," he asked, "I could be free of my hideous flesh and truly be a doll for a child to love?"

"Yes," said the voice. "But be wary. Love is in alliance with madness."

The dwarf ignored the voice's warning. He shook with excitement. "Then make me," he whispered, "a doll *all* will love, young and old. The most magnificent doll of all."

"Be careful what you wish for," the voice cautioned. "Are you sure this is your wish?"

Again, the dwarf ignored the voice's warning. "Yes. Yes. Oh, yes," he said eagerly. "Make me a doll *all* will want to love."

The next morning, shops in the village opened their doors as usual. All except for the curiosity shop. Children, kissed and patted off to school, looked for the dwarf and marveled that he was not in front of his shop, his lips twisted into a grin and his fingers all waving like magic wands.

Adults gossiped about the strangeness of the curiosity shop not opening. The old dwarf had always, for as long as the oldest resident of the village could recall, opened early in the morning. He would waddle out on his stubby legs and wave to the children as they trudged off to school. The dwarf, everyone said, was ancient; he had lived forever and never would die. His carved creations were lovely and lifelike; they attracted children and parents alike who bought at his shop. Now this morning the curiosity shop was closed and gravely quiet.

No one bothered the shop all day. But

when the children scurried home from their lessons, some paused to peek in the shop's window, past the dolls and other wonderful carvings.

"Do you see him?" one small girl asked.

"No," said another with awe. "Where could he be?"

All the children worried over this mystery, for the dwarf had always been seen greeting them in front of his shop. Though awed by his grotesque form, they yet needed him there to touch their lives in his special way.

"I think," a boy lean with the growth of puberty said, "that he was attacked by the dolls, who came to life and killed him, because he was so ugly." The boy raised his arms, grimaced, and chased the children away with cackles and screams.

The village elders met at the church after they had eaten their supper. It was decided to investigate the mystery of the curiosity shop. So they all marched solemnly off to the yet closed and deathly silent shop. Their feet crunch-crunched on the frosting of the new snow cake. And as they did so they drew after them a parade of children eager to see death, for they were of one mind—that the old dwarf had finally died.

Having forced the front door to the shop, the elders and children entered stealthily.

"Ouch!" an elder yelled.

"Are you all right?" another asked.

"Yes, yes, I hit my knee on a table leg, that's all. Someone find a lamp."

There was a clatter as hands groped for a lamp.

"Here's one," an elder called. Then "Oh, oh," and the sound of breaking glass. "Oops, sorry," said the person who had found the lamp.

"Is it still good?"

"I think so."

"Well, light it then."

Children giggled at the clumsiness of the adults.

Finally, the lamp was lit. A crack wriggled its way up the glass chimney. One small piece at the top was missing, but the lamp gave off good light. Everyone could see that the old dwarf was not there. Not alive, nor dead.

But sitting on the mantle above the fireplace was a newly carved doll—the finest piece of craftsmanship any of the elders had ever seen, and the prettiest boy

doll any child had ever laid eyes on. All were transfixed by the doll's sublime splendor.

"Light a fire in the fireplace," someone said. "Let us see this doll in better light."

Soon, logs blazed in the fireplace. The magnificent doll was taken down carefully and held by an elder for all to admire. There was a graceful symmetry to the doll, and a brilliance in the eyes. The face was of a ruddy countenance. All over, the doll was smooth and polished; it seemed to shine.

The lean boy who had earlier scared the younger children reached out and snatched the doll away from the elder. He turned to leave.

"Young man," the elder said, grabbing the boy's collar. The doll fell from the boy's hands and everyone gasped, but it was caught by a child of five.

"Pretty," was all the child said. She held the doll to her chest and a warm glow filled her. Then she looked up and saw all the others eyeing her jealously. She stepped back nervously.

"Give me the doll, Katarina," the elder who had taken the exquisite doll from the mantle said. "It is too nice for you. I want it for my child."

"Why your child?" another elder asked indignantly. He grabbed the doll.

Abruptly, children's hands and adults' hands were thrashing at one another, trying to take the doll. In the struggle, Katarina was knocked down, but no one bothered to pick her up. They were all obsessed by the beauty of the dwarf's creation.

Then the lean boy again held the doll. He shouted, "I got it. It's mine." But as he claimed victory he stumbled over Katarina and reached out to stop his fall, the doll flying from his hands into the fireplace.

Katarina got up.

Everyone stood dazed as flames licked at the magnificent boy doll, turning his flawless glossed skin the color of jet. Katarina reached toward the fireplace as if to pull the doll out of the fire, but an arm held her back. The doll's spell was going up in smoke.

As the lovely boy doll burned, someone pointed and said, "Look." There, falling from the doll's eyes and running down his cheeks, were tears.

R. Kinkade lives in Tehachapi, California.



Photo by Pamela Hunter

Strange Encounters

I am the stranger laden with treasure
 Nowhere to lay my head
 Wash my wounds with salty sympathy
 Sit still and let me spread for you
 A curious cloth, an array of toys.
 For the time being, reserve for me
 The hidden guest room, where my awful dreams
 Can sleep, where shells can be fished up
 By the edge of a dangerous ocean.
 Do not fear, my time will come
 And you will send me away
 And you will string my shells together
 And say, "I've been to Morocco!"
 Light and lonely again, I'll depart
 With my road show fermenting in my heart
 Hoping to find another guest before I burst.

Pity me not for having swallowed the universe.
 Pity me not when you find me
 Sobbing and trembling as the train pulls out.
 If I see you, I'll take that character away
 And somersault back to your heart.

—B. E. Stock
Astoria, New York

El Lobo

Here in the backcountry
 water laps the shore
 and stars rain fire
 from the heavens

Like a night sweat
 an eerie howling,
 wolves along the rim
 sing their ancient song

I am alone
 except for el lobo,
 king of boundary waters
 haunting my wilderness dreams

—Sherry B. Hanson
Brunswick, Maine

Night on the Grass

I decided
 to sleep with the woods last night.
 Fell asleep
 in mother's arms.
 Living warmth.
 Living!
 My eyes with the stars.

Morning
 warm dew lingering on my face.
 As I sit up from the ground,
 the smell of grass
 is in my hair.
 Damp dirt clings to my skin.

The stars
 walk with me, home.
 Their magic dust shot in me.

—Angi Drerup
Ft. Wayne, Indiana

The River

Soft white flakes
 caress my face.
 The sled is flying downhill
 to the river.
 The tails of my scarf
 flutter at my sides like wings.
 And the wind whistles:
 faster, faster, faster!

The sled
 leaps into the air.
 And I know
 I am alive.

—Abraham Linik
Needham, Massachusetts

Mountain Rain

A summer
 downpour—

our clothes
 stick on us.

We drive off,
 the wet road lit

with wild
 sunflowers.

Around a bend
 we splash

into sunlight.
 Rags of cloud

drift up
 valleysides.

People subsisted
 in these mountains

once, on wild pig
 and beans.

For them, weather
 was a second skin.

In the rain,
 they just kept

on working.

—Monica Adams
Charlottesville, Virginia

Infiniti

Beneath that cold austere heart
lies a dream unknowingly spoken—
of thunder and lightning mixed
together in a cacophony of sound
and a single icicle
drip
drip
dripping off the roof
of a neighboring gutter.
Therein lies simplicity itself
and possibilities yet to be discovered.

—Marie Yuen
Darien, Illinois

Fiesta

The houses perch on the hill
like roosters, with their roofs
comb-red.
The streamers, bright unnatural ribs,
rake the buildings with their crisp,
precise arcs.
Later, they're tattered and limp
as drunks.
The lazy mariachi beat
unravels through
the window.

—Rose Schumacher
Goleta, California

A Soft Desolate Wind Muffles the High Pines

Everything recedes from me as I advance,
Receding too. My children go
As I go toward them in my heart.
One cannot, I cannot become another.
They support, they are these genes
That thought does not expose.
Thought hides a tenderness I feel,
Being who I am. Winds blow, mud roils, rises,
Cracks up life in sparky fires. What lives
Lives as year by year each version disappears
In growth. I look for consolation
In the pains I take, the pains I make
From all that is not me and all that is.

—Thomas Lisk
Sumter, South Carolina

Chicago Dawn

Rain chases night away
And dawn struggles to emerge
As sleepy cars begin to murmur,
Later increasing to loud throbs.
Whirlpools of workers
Spin down enormous drain,
Flooding the Loop
As factory whistles chirp.

I, an insomniac, sit alone,
Rubbing lazy eyelids
As turtle hours pass.
Across the way a woman calls,
“Darling, where are you?”
I long to answer, “Here!”

—Ralph E. Martin
Richmond, Virginia

Eupatrid

This ancient tree
held me as a youth,
caught my kites
and bound them for ransom;
taught me how to climb,
to ascend above
my own limitations,
raised me, rooted
in this same fertile soil,
and now those limbs
that fought summer storms;
that trunk that would bend
but never break
is decaying—
I have decided
to cut the tree,
to save its heart
for a casket,
to share its grave.

—Larry Boggan
Grants, New Mexico



Photo by John Kingsley

Kathleen Natiello, Coordinator

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*"Sierra's Song" by Katerina Damjanoska, Age 16, Crown Point High School
Crown Point, Indiana*

Last Rain Forest

Listen

The rain forest
Will talk

The animals

Quietly
Quickly
Alertly

For someone

The trees
Waving
Swaying
Growing
Dying

For someone
To chop

The soil

Plants

Of the rain forest
All seem

The

Common

Please save
The last rain forest

Closely

The rain forest

To you

Moving so

Quietly
Quickly
All waiting

To shoot them
The trees

Waving
Swaying
Dying
All waiting

To chop
Them down

Water

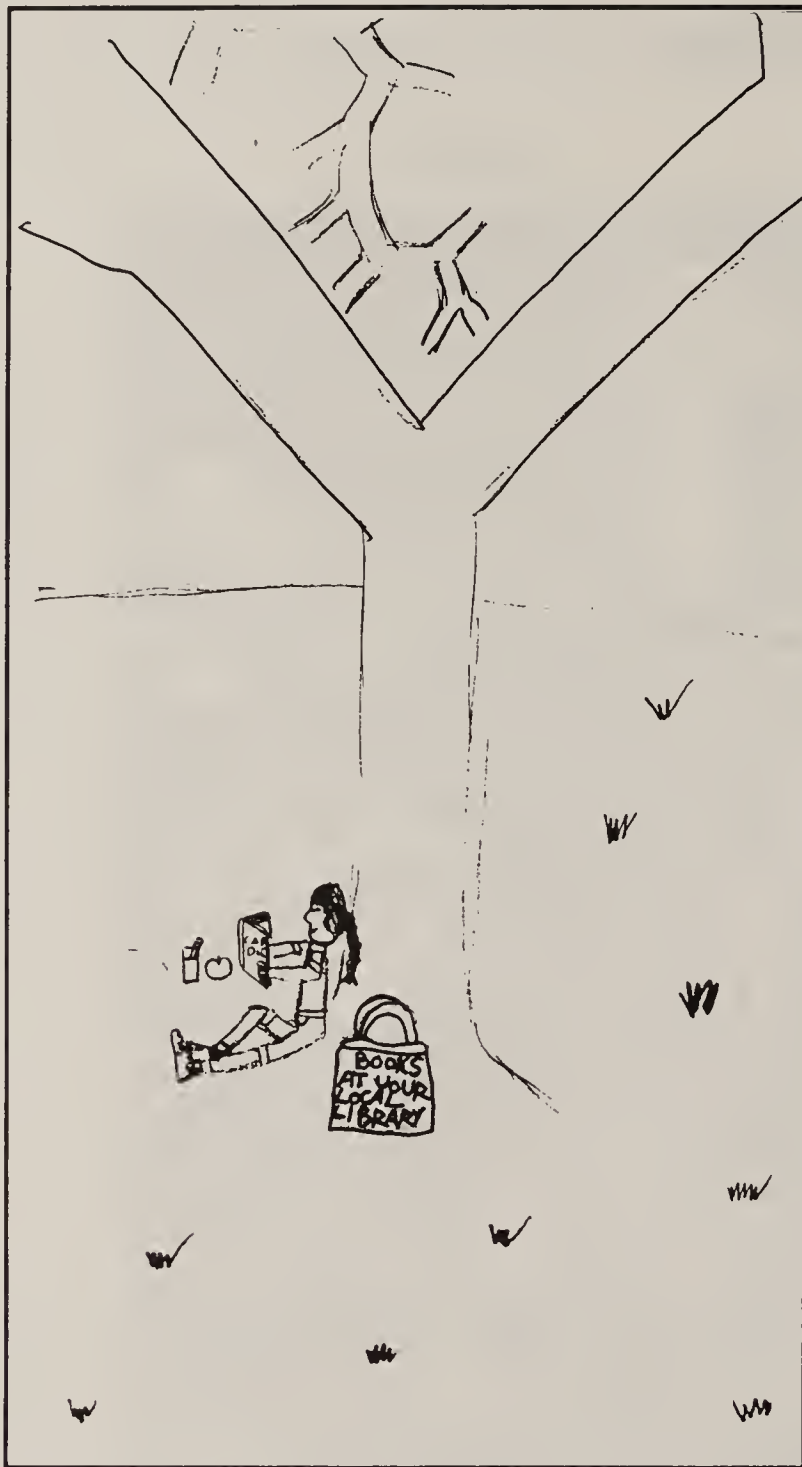
Animals
Of the rain forest

To share

Same

Plea
Please save
The last rain forest

—Stephanie Hammond
—Karen Van Ruitenbeek
North Ranch Elementary
Scottsdale, Arizona



*Illustration by Claire Miccio,
Grade 4, University School
Bloomington, Indiana*

Reading Is Entertaining

Reading is entertaining,
Educational, too,
Taking me places
I could never go to,
Making windows to the world
With a variety of books.
Everyone is reading
In every house, in all nooks.
Books are extraordinary,
Mysterious and cool.
And if you read, you
Will not be a fool.

—Karl Spork, Grade 3
*Elliott School
Munster, Indiana*

Reading Is Magic

Reading is magic
If you pretend
You are in trouble
And are saved at the end.
You follow a princess
To a palace in the sky,
Or find some wings
And start to fly.
You could jump on a boat
And sail away,
Or fly up to space
For a couple of days.
Ride on dolphins
In a sea full of fish.
If you imagine,
You can do anything you wish.
Read!

—Katie Stine, Grade 3
*Elliott School
Munster, Indiana*

Fantasy Land

Reading is magic—
Excellent, too.
It takes you to places
That you never knew.
You don't need a boat,
You don't need a train—
Just your imagination—
To be entertained.

There's biography, mystery,
Scary books and more.
Pick one for yourself—
One you haven't read before.
Reading is exciting—
Wouldn't it be grand
To ride a magic carpet
To fantasy land!

—Jennifer Lee, Grade 3
*Elliott School
Munster, Indiana*

THE PARTY-TIME MURDER

by
Jennifer Taber

Paula felt lonely as she looked at her huge house. She sat and thought, "I have no company but the maid." Paula thought and thought. Finally, a great idea came to her. "I will have a party. Since today is Monday, I will have it on Friday."

She grabbed a pen and paper and wrote invitations to her best friend, Lalya, and to most of her other friends: John, Sara, Joey, Patty, Maryann and Kristy. She also invited her cousins, Jessi and Amy. She sent her invitations through the mail the next day. Paula was thrilled.

Then, all of a sudden, the phone rang. It was Linda.

"Hi," Linda said.

"Hi," answered Paula.

"Do you want to come over Friday?"

"I can't," said Paula.

"Why not?" asked Linda.

"I'm having a big party!"

"I wasn't invited," Linda said, horrified.

Paula gulped. "I forgot about you." Quickly, she added, "Would you like to come to my party?"

Linda was furious. "No way," she screamed. "But watch out—I'll get you!" And she hung up before Paula could say another word.

Under her breath, Paula said, "Who needs Linda, anyway?"

Finally, it was Friday. Everyone was to arrive at 6:00 p.m. Once everyone arrived, they started the party. They had food, decorations and all the trimmings. All of a sudden, the lights went out. Paula screamed and ran for a flashlight and knocked over the maid.

Paula said, "MOVE, you stupid maid!"

The maid simply said, "I will get back at you when you least expect it."

Paula snorted. Then she said, "I am going upstairs to get candles out of the attic."

Paula felt strange—like she had never felt before when going up the attic stairs. She opened the door ever so slowly. Strangely, she saw golf clubs. Paula hated

golf. The only people she knew who liked golf were Linda and the maid. Paula didn't remember letting either one put her golf clubs up in the attic. But who cared about them, anyway?

Suddenly, something tapped Paula on the shoulder. She turned around to see someone in jeans, a tee-shirt, and wearing a little, gold bracelet. Suddenly, something long and hard hit her on the head. In a matter of seconds, Paula was dead.

Downstairs, the power was back on. Suddenly, they heard a loud knock at the door. It was Linda.

"Hi!" Linda said.

"Hello!" said Amy.

Jessi said, "What's keeping Paula?"

Then, Kristy said, "Linda, I love that long, lacy dress and that silk bow. And you know what? That little, gold bracelet is perfect."

Suddenly, they heard Jessi scream. They ran upstairs to see what the problem was. There lay dead Paula with a candle in one hand and a golf club in the other.

Everyone stood there ready to cry when Sara said, "I'm calling the police!"

Jessi and Lalya began to cry. Amy sat on the stairs next to Linda and said, "You did it, didn't you?"

"What?" said Linda, beginning to sweat.

"YOU KILLED PAULA!" Amy screamed.

"You have no evidence," Linda hissed.

"I know you did it. You made a stupid mistake. Your name is on the golf club."

Suddenly, the police came to the door. Sara ran downstairs, too horrified to speak.

The police questioned Linda and put her in jail. A few days later, Linda was strangely murdered. At Paula's funeral, Amy noticed a little, gold bracelet with the initial "L" on it on Paula's wrist. Just like the one Linda wore.

—Jennifer Taber, Grade 5
Hardwick Elementary
Lubbock, Texas

PABLO

by
Mitch Walter

I was eight years old and thought I knew it all. I thought I had the world figured out. I didn't know anything. I would soon learn.

Let me start from the beginning. A couple years ago, when I was still going to daycare, I was carefree—not a worry in the world. But I would soon change because a boy started going there—a boy who would change my life. The boy's name was Pablo. He started going there and the first time I saw him I knew instantly that he was mentally retarded. At first, I didn't think too much of it because new kids were always coming and going in our daycare system.

That afternoon, I saw him sitting on the swing. He looked depressed so I thought I would go over to him and try to talk to him. As I was walking over there, I felt kind of funny, like I was going to make a complete fool of myself trying to talk to him. But when I got there he took one look at me and I looked at him and it was as if I knew what he was thinking. He was asking if I could be his friend and I was accepting.

So, it was like that. Without a word, we were buddies. He did whatever I did. If I rode bikes, he tried bikes, too. If I shot baskets, so did he. If I got into trouble, he did too. Actually, I think that was all my fault because Pablo did whatever I did. He did not know any better. If I had jumped off a bridge, Pablo would have, too.

But what I did not know was that he had a disease which affected his brain and that he had a limited time to live.

One day Pablo did not come to daycare. At first, I didn't think much about it because I thought he was sick. But I just had a feeling that it was not sickness that was keeping Pablo away. At noon I finally asked our daycare teacher where he was. I don't think she wanted to tell me what was wrong with Pablo because she thought I

would take it too hard. She figured I would find out sooner or later, so she told me. She said that Pablo had a disease that affected his brain and that it was life-threatening, and that Pablo was not doing well.

After she told me that, I started crying, not out of sadness but out of rage. I was mad—mad at the world because it would take my friend's life away. That day I did not say a single word. But that night the fullness of it hit me. I would never see Pablo again. I broke down and started crying right in the middle of the living room. My dad came over and asked me what was wrong. So I told him the story. I think he cried a little bit, too.

A year passed and I forgot about Pablo. Then one night I had a strange dream. I dreamt that I was Pablo and Pablo was me. That dream made me realize what it is like to be handicapped and not know what is going on around you.

Another couple years went by and I forgot about the dream. Then, on New Year's Day I was going down to Trinidad School to play basketball and I saw Pablo in a van. He looked a lot different than when I saw him last. His eyes did not have dark lines under them. He used to wear sweats and turtlenecks—now he wore jeans and a baseball hat. Just the sight of him still alive made me happy. I wanted to scream for joy. I wanted to stop the van and tell Pablo to keep on living.

Something happened to me that day. I don't know what it was and I can't explain it. But I know it happened to me just by the sight of my old friend still living and enjoying himself.

—M. Walter, Grade 6, attends
Sunnybrae Junior School in Arcata, California.

ALL THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD!

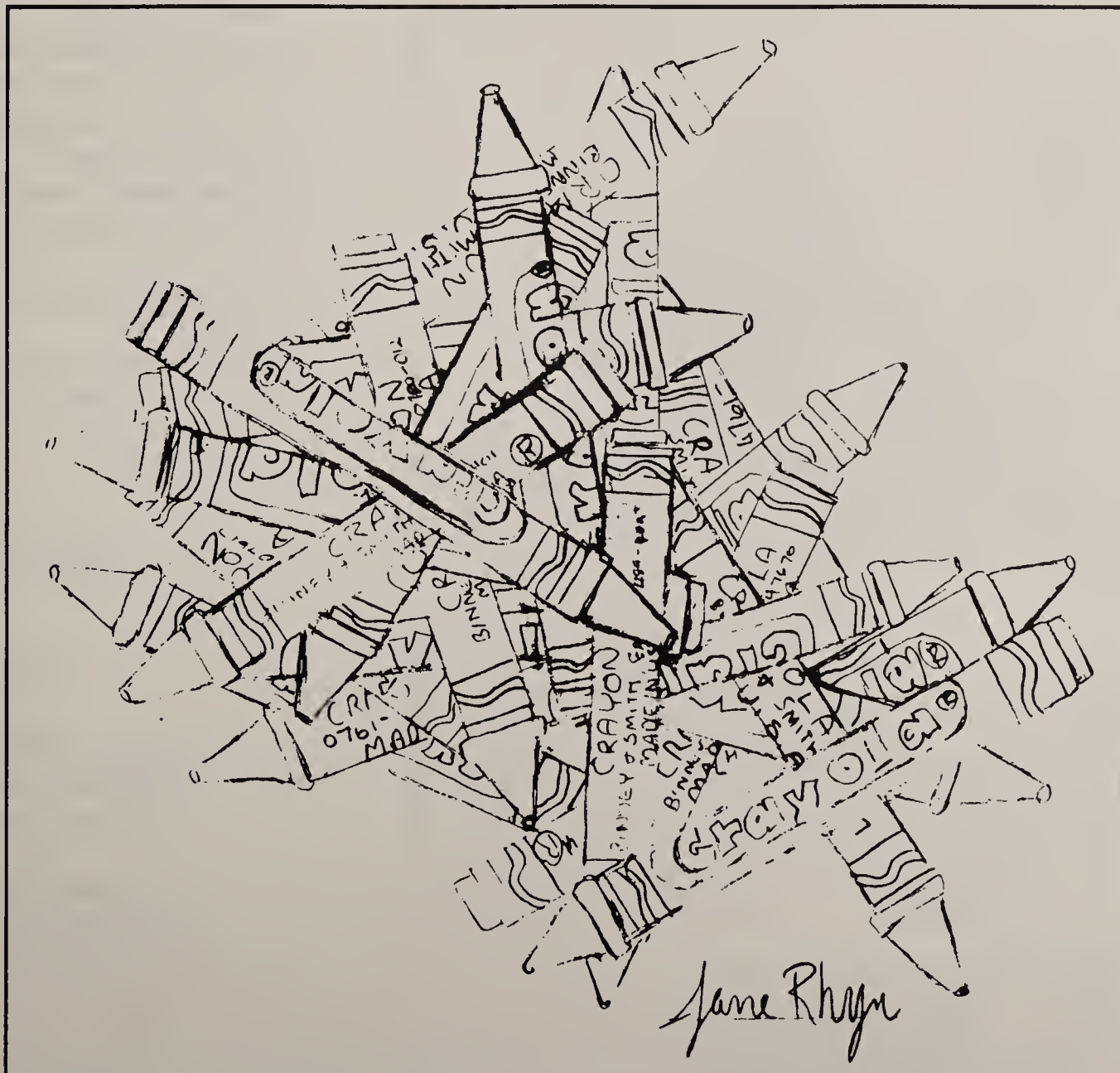
by
Christina Bonhama

The world we live in was planned by God. He planned for the days and nights. And He planned for the trees and the flowers and the animals. He planned for the sun to shine on Some Days, and the rain to fall on others, and He planned for many kinds of trees, and many kinds of flowers, and many kinds of animals.

He wanted the world to be beautiful. God also planned for people and, most of all, He planned for children. God wanted children to be as beautiful as the world around them. So, He planned that they should all be different, just as trees and flowers and animals are different. God planned that children should be many different sizes and shapes.

I am done.

C. Bonhama, Grade 2, attends Wilson School in Hammond, Indiana.



*Illustration by Jane Rhyn, Age 9
University School
Bloomington, Indiana*

Nature

Nature is hot
Nature is cold
Nature is pretty
And never grows old.
Nature is full of wild animals,
Nature is full of plants,
Nature is very beautiful
Even with all the ants.

—Jennifer Lee, Grade 3
Elliott School
Munster, Indiana

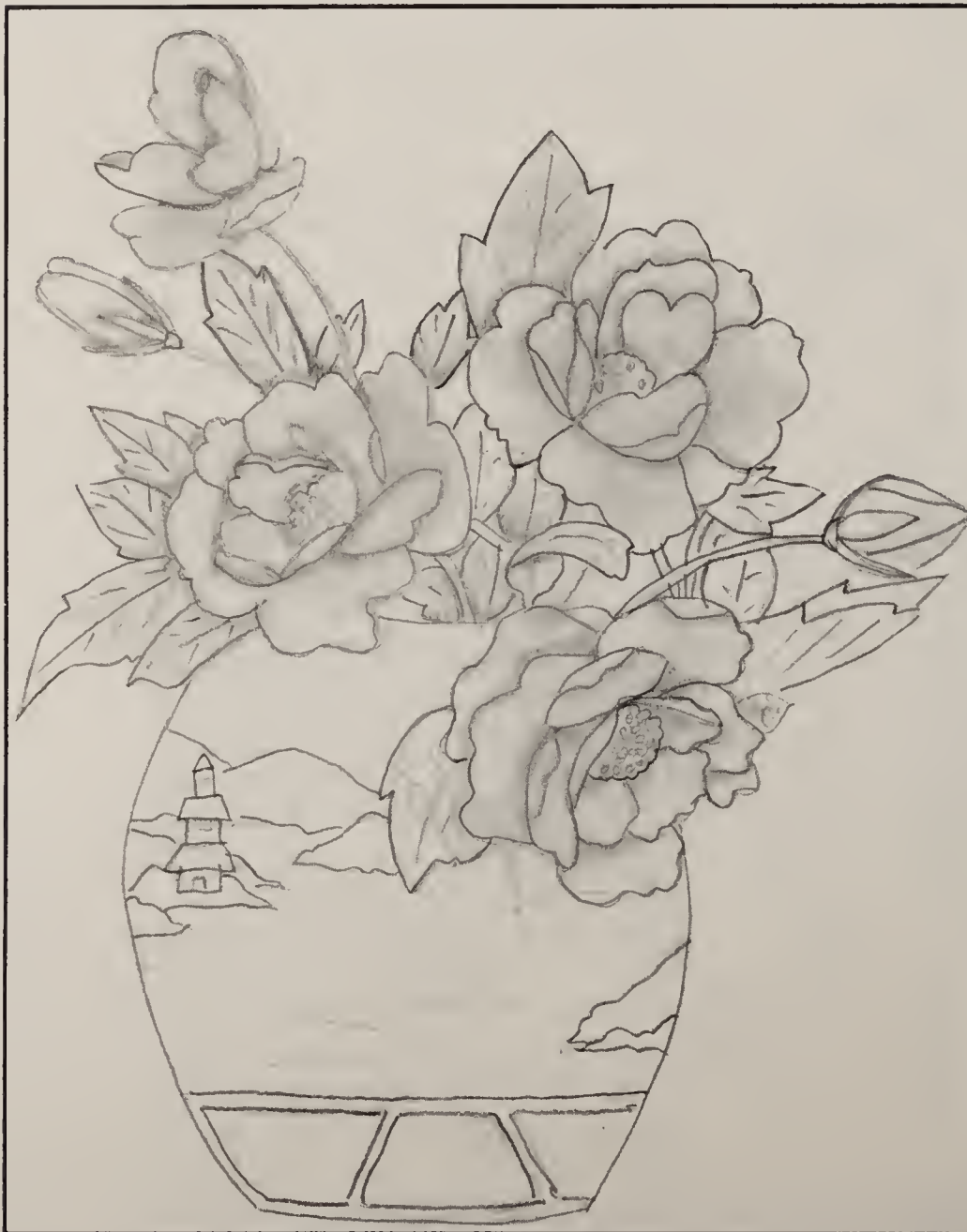


Illustration by Farah Hassan
Grade 6, University School
Bloomington, Indiana

Changes

A misty, cold morning,
A snowy, white field,
All of these are in warning,
When spring comes to shield.

A calm, peaceful day,
With buds poking up,
They will all change in a way,
When summer erupts.

A splash of bright colors,
Paints over the earth,
Our world attracts others
To witness summer's birth.

The artist is leaving,
The colors are dull,
Nature is receiving
A cold winter's call.

A world that is always changing,
Season upon season,
And the things Mother Nature is arranging,
Never come without life or reason.

—Adrienne Lebo, Grade 5
Elliott School
Munster, Indiana

Flowers

Flowers are lovely.
They are very colorful.
They have a sweet smell.

—Chrystal Hanish, Grade 3
Riley Elementary
Hammond, Indiana

Future Uncertain Past

Looking over my shoulder
The months create a blurring distortion
As I squint into my recent past
I cannot remember how I came to exist in this moment

The more I live
The more I think
The more I forget

If only I had a moment to turn around

There are no hours
No minutes
I have no choice
But to look straight
Into the uncertainty
Before me
And proceed

—Jessica E. Tescher, Age 18
Pendleton Heights High School
Pendleton, Indiana

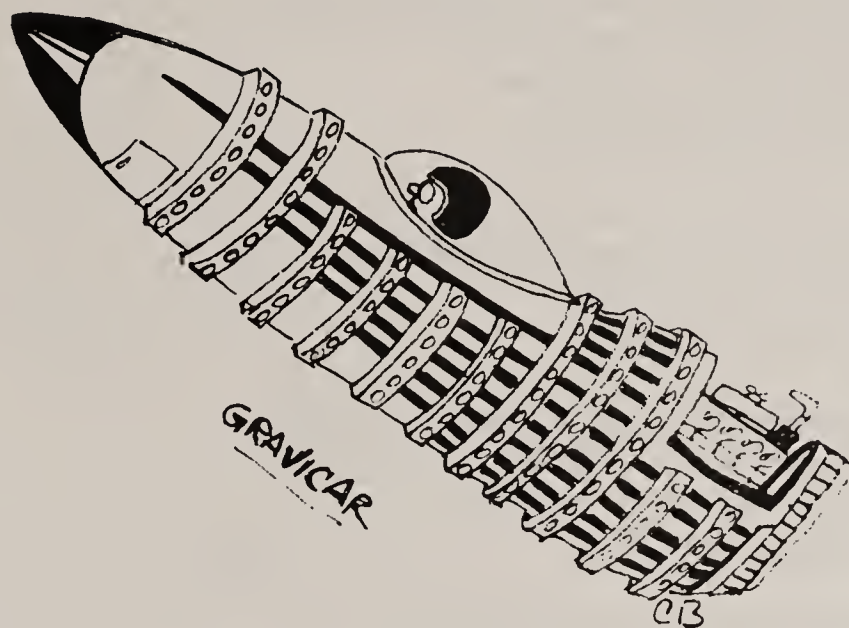


Illustration by Cal Barber

?

Who is upside-down? he or me?
He is down 'cause I am up
Yet I am down, for he sees me down

So where am I? here or there?
He is there and I am here,
For he sees himself here and me there

So where am I? here or there? up or down?
Maybe someday we'll see each other,
Not up nor down, here nor there
Just somewhere,
Together.

—Ahui Herrera, Grade 11
E.C. Central High School
East Chicago, Indiana

The Doberman and the Swine

While wandering through the flower grove,
What wondrous sight I see,
A doberman on legs of two
And a crystal ball for me.

To ask him I felt awkward,
But to not would pass the chance
To see into my future,
To catch a single glance.

So, out of my mouth, the words did spring,
“What will my future be?”
“It won’t consist of happiness,”
Is what he said to me.

Sadly surprised, I closed my eyes.
The doberman disappeared.

So, on I trudged through a lonely bog
For happiness wasn’t mine,
Until I beheld on legs of two
A muddy, smelly swine.

In his hooves he held some tarot cards,
Whose importance glared down upon me.
Do cards and crystal balls share opinions
Or do they disagree?

I could wonder forever and ever,
But take the chance I did
To ask the swine my future,
Which in the cards was hid.

To me he smiled and spoke with a grunt,
“In the future I do see
A life of happiness and joy,
Of comfort and of glee!”

Gladly surprised, I dried my eyes.
The swine disappeared.

Through the flower grove I walked once more
For gloom was not my future state
Until again I saw the doberman,
Which I’d grown to hate.

I felt compelled to go to him
And hear his wicked tale
Of how my life was born to rot,
And my soul was sure to fail.

But instead I closed my eyes, and I realized
Any fate I wanted could be mine.
The cycle would keep going
Until I started showing
That I alone could choose ‘tween dog or swine.

I found that one’s fate was not held
In what others may say
But instead in one’s heart,
Which when let, leads the way.

So, in the flower grove I made my home.
The doberman showed face no more.
And with my heart as my leader,
My future was free to soar.

—Jacob P. Gettig, Grade 11
Griffith High School
Griffith, Indiana

Cats

Cats are so cuddly.
They have fur and nine lives, too.
They play all day long.

—Holly Lore, Grade 3
Riley Elementary
Hammond, Indiana

Illustration also by Holly Lore

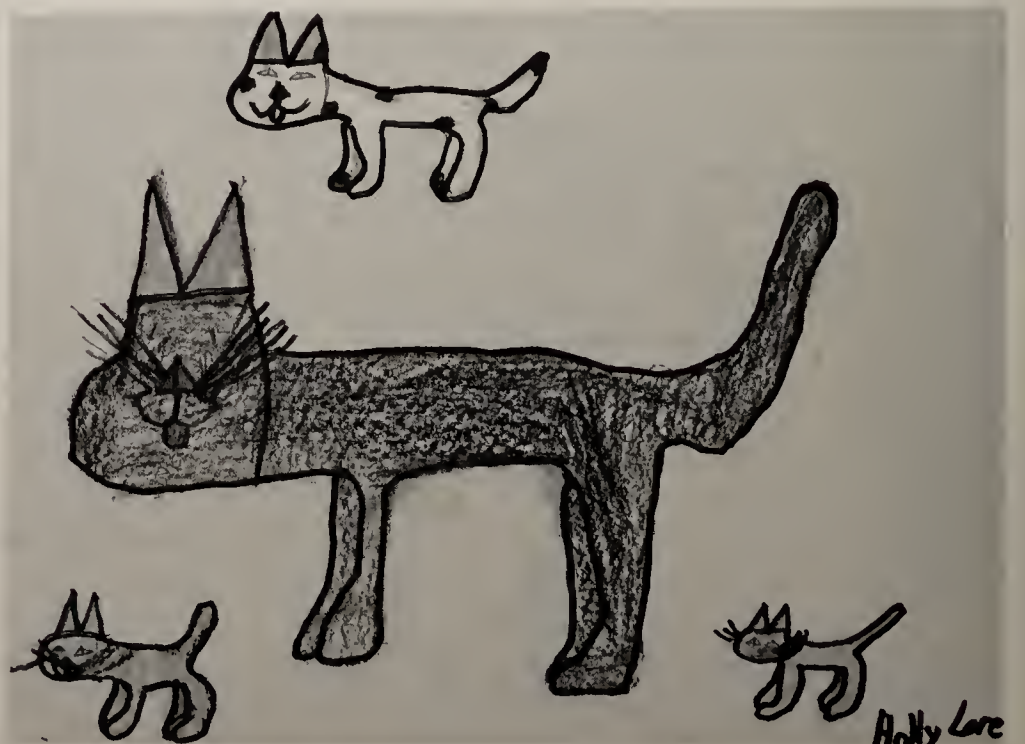
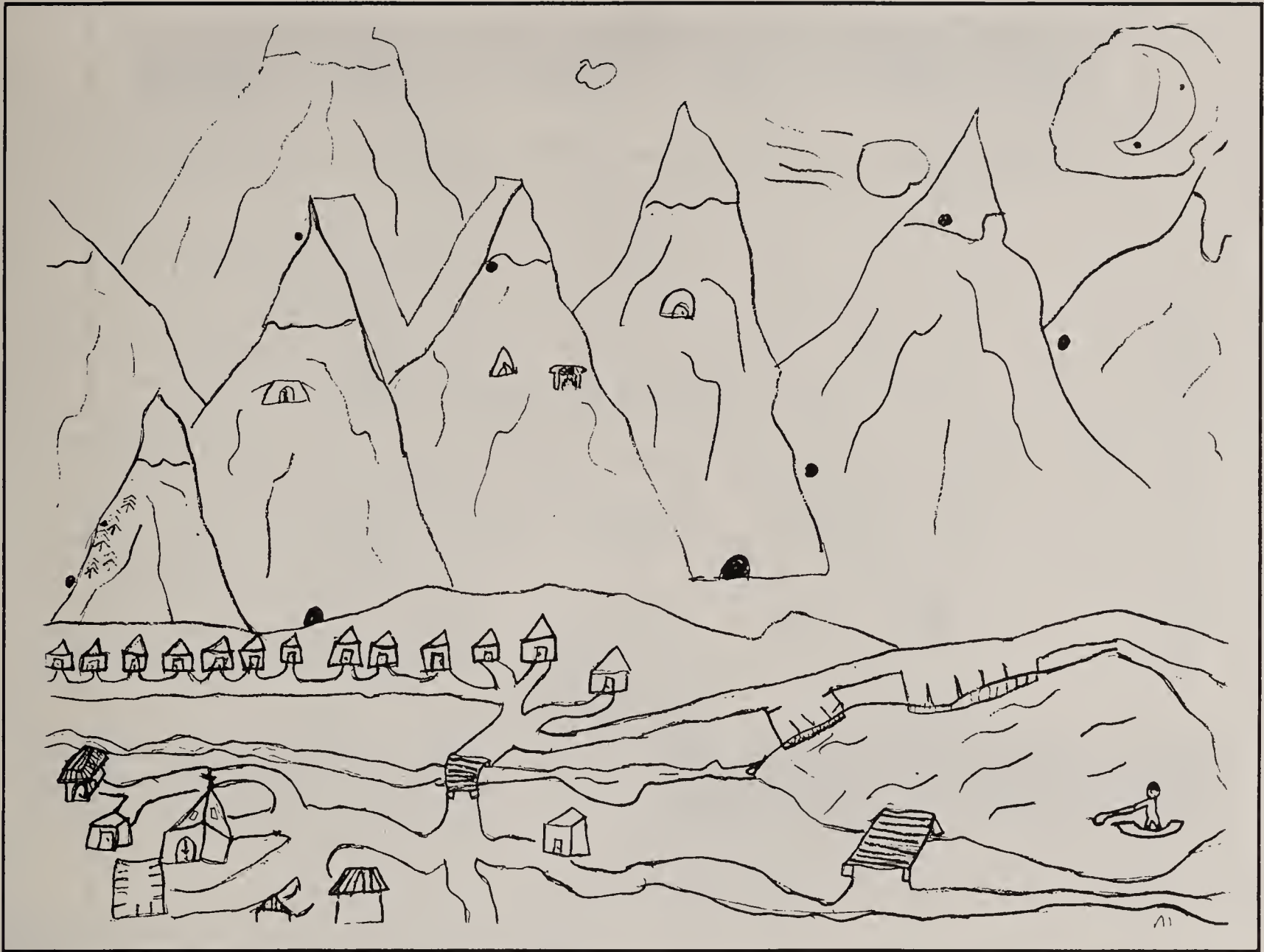


Illustration by Ali Soltani, Age 10
University School, Bloomington, Indiana



WHY I AM A WINNER

by
Steven Mendoza

I am a winner because I say "NO!" to drugs. Everyone is a winner. You don't have to be a great athlete and you don't have to be an "A" student. If you're a winner, you should be yourself. If you be yourself, you are a winner.

Winning doesn't always mean doing good at a sport. You're a winner if you have good sportsmanship. Congratulate the other team if they beat you at sports, by saying, "Good Game!" and shaking their hands. If you do win a game, don't brag and make the other team feel bad.

Winning means fun, appreciation, and doing good at something. If you're a winner, you shouldn't let people put you down. You should already know that what people say is not always correct. You should be able to get over it. If you're a winner, you shouldn't call people names just because your friends don't like them. Your friends are not always right.

You should do whatever you want to do and become anyone or anything you want to be.

That's what makes me a winner.

—S. Mendoza, Grade 5, attends
Elliott School in
Munster, Indiana.

Illustrations also by Andrea Williams



THE MISSING BOYS OR HOW TREES WERE MADE

By
Andrea Williams

Once there was a witch and her name was Haley. She lived in a shining castle with 365 rooms. She also had the biggest back yard you've ever seen. Her house had 85 bathrooms, 64 kitchens, 126 bedrooms and many other rooms that weren't used by the witch.

The witch usually lived peacefully in the castle, but she would get mad at little boys. They would run around outside and tease the witch. She would grab them by their hair and drag them through the hall, the living room, the bedrooms and past rooms with blazing fireplaces. Old pictures and cobwebs swayed in the breeze as Haley pulled the helpless boys along.

Nobody knew what happened to their little boys. It was such a mystery. The whole town was stumped but no one suspected the witch. Now, I bet you want to know what the witch did with the little boys, but you will have to wait until later in the story.

Here is a conversation between two stumped mothers, Mrs. Hatfield and Mrs. Snodgrass.

"Did John disappear just like Mark did?" asked Mrs. Hatfield.

"Yes, I can't believe it! I wonder who took them," exclaimed Mrs. Snodgrass.

"Beats me. It's so strange," Mrs. Hatfield replied.

"You're right. Truthfully, I think the witch did it and I'm going to call the mayor," said Mrs. Snodgrass.

The mayor of the town called a meeting and they formed a search party to try and find the missing boys. Lately, the witch had been growing a lot of trees in her back yard. Passersby said that the witch had also been keeping to herself. She was usually very sociable. People were becoming more and more suspicious of her.

The mothers were crying constantly for their lost boys and everyone was sad. The men from the search party had no luck in finding them. The police investigated the witch and her castle but also found noth-

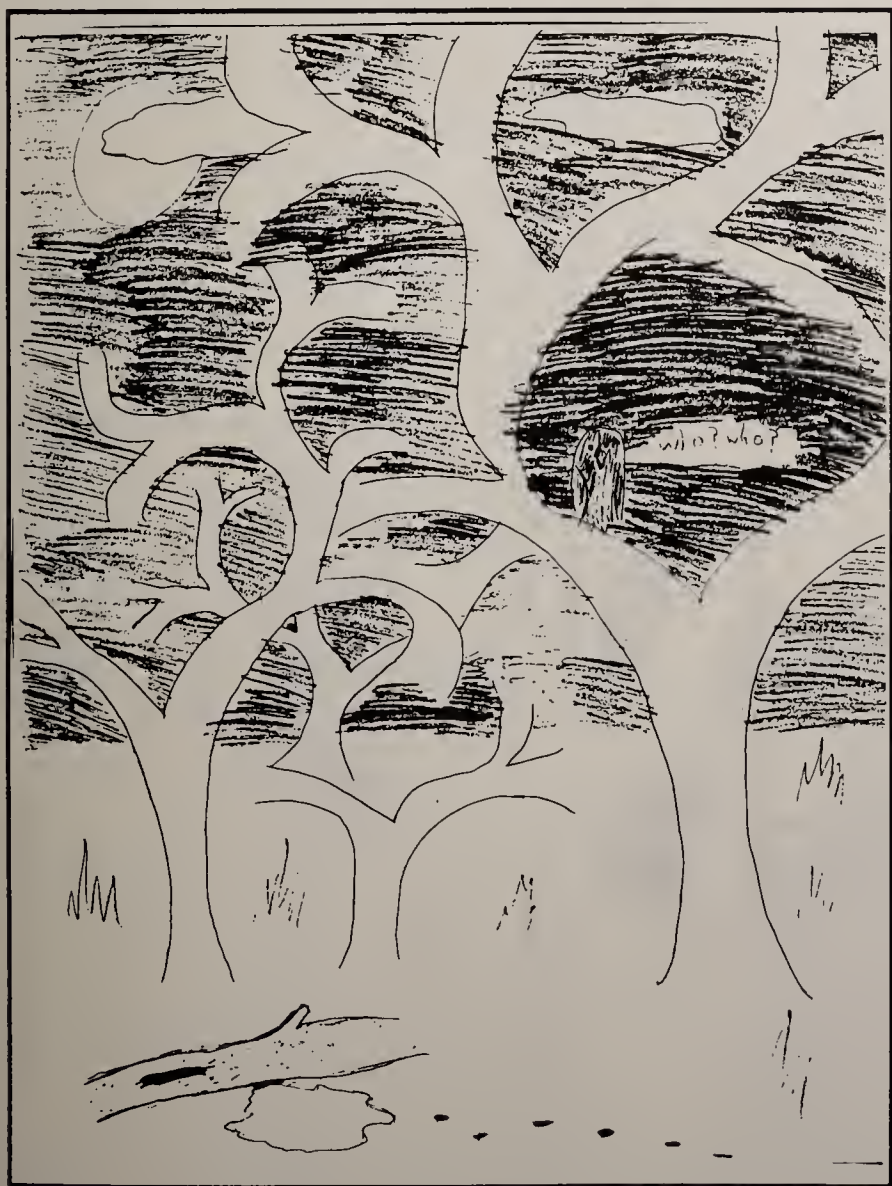
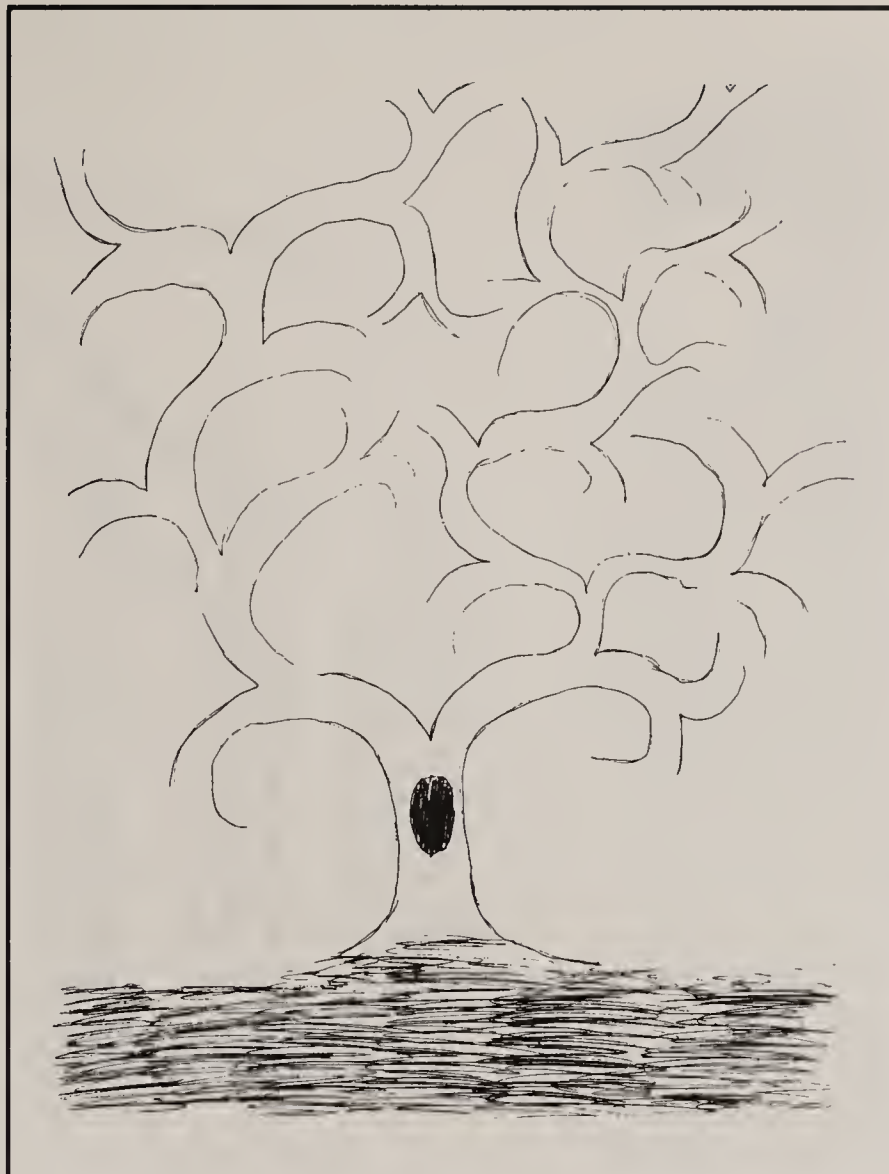
ing. They interviewed her frequently but found no clues. Meanwhile, the witch was afraid they would discover her secret. No one found a trace of the missing boys as they searched and searched and searched.

Well, let me tell you what happened to the boys. Haley would take them to her back yard where she had holes already dug. She would stick the boys into the holes, head down! This went on for ten years. Still, people had no clue as to what happened to their little boys.

I bet you've all seen a tree with a split trunk and two branches going in opposite directions. Well, if you don't know what I'm talking about, here is a picture of one.

That kind of tree is one of the boys. You see, where the trunk splits is where the boys grew into the ground and became trees.

One day, the witch had an unusually large load of boys to plant. One of them got away and hid in the shadows of the house. He eventually got out a side door which he

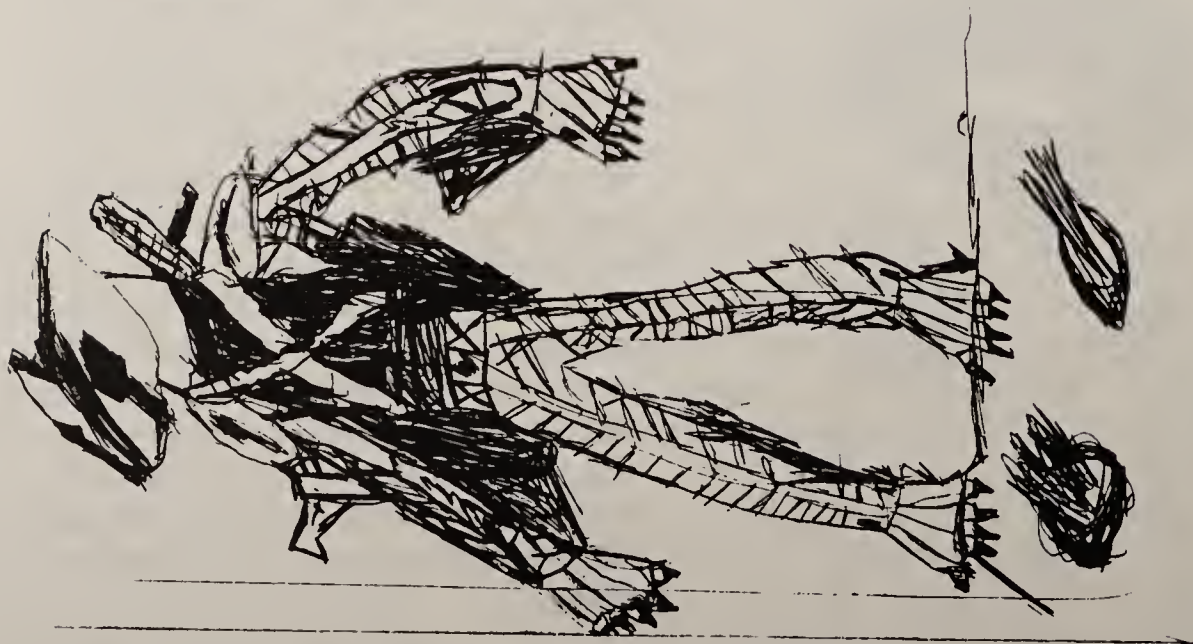


found by accident. He touched a tapestry and a secret door opened. (The house was full of secret traps and doors.) He ran to tell the mayor but in the woods, he tripped on an old, dead, fallen tree. (That's when I came into the story.) I found him lying unconscious and his head was bleeding.

He started to mumble something about a witch and boys who turned into trees. Luckily, I had some bandages with me. When I cleaned him up, he told me the whole story. I was so astonished, I could hardly believe my ears.

I wasn't strong enough to carry him back to town, so I left him there and went to get help. Many townspeople returned with me, but when we arrived at the spot where I had left him, he wasn't there. Now that he is gone, who will believe my story? Will the missing boys remain a mystery forever?

A. Williams, Grade 4, attends Wadsworth Elementary School in Griffith, Indiana.



*Illustration by Charles Sloan
Age 7, University School
Bloomington, Indiana*

Gangs

I open my eyes and see anger and violence,
Gangs against gangs, friends against friends.
When will all of the violence end?

This gang hates that one, that one hates them,
They will fight until one or the other is destroyed,
Even if it means killing family or friend.

Come on, join us: wear our colors, be loyal, be true.
Steal, kill, do whatever we want you to do.

Faculty and teachers ignore the fact that gangs roam
The halls. Children against children, they are killing
Each other, but officials offer an excuse.

Gang violence has turned into an all-out war,
Neighborhoods ravaged, humans scared to walk outdoors.
Innocent bystanders caught in gun fights,
If lucky, they make it out with their lives. . . maybe.

Come on, join us: wear our colors, be loyal, be true.
Steal, kill, do whatever we want you to do.

*—Joe Oslawski, Age 18
Calumet High School
Gary, Indiana*

“Sun” illustration and poem by:

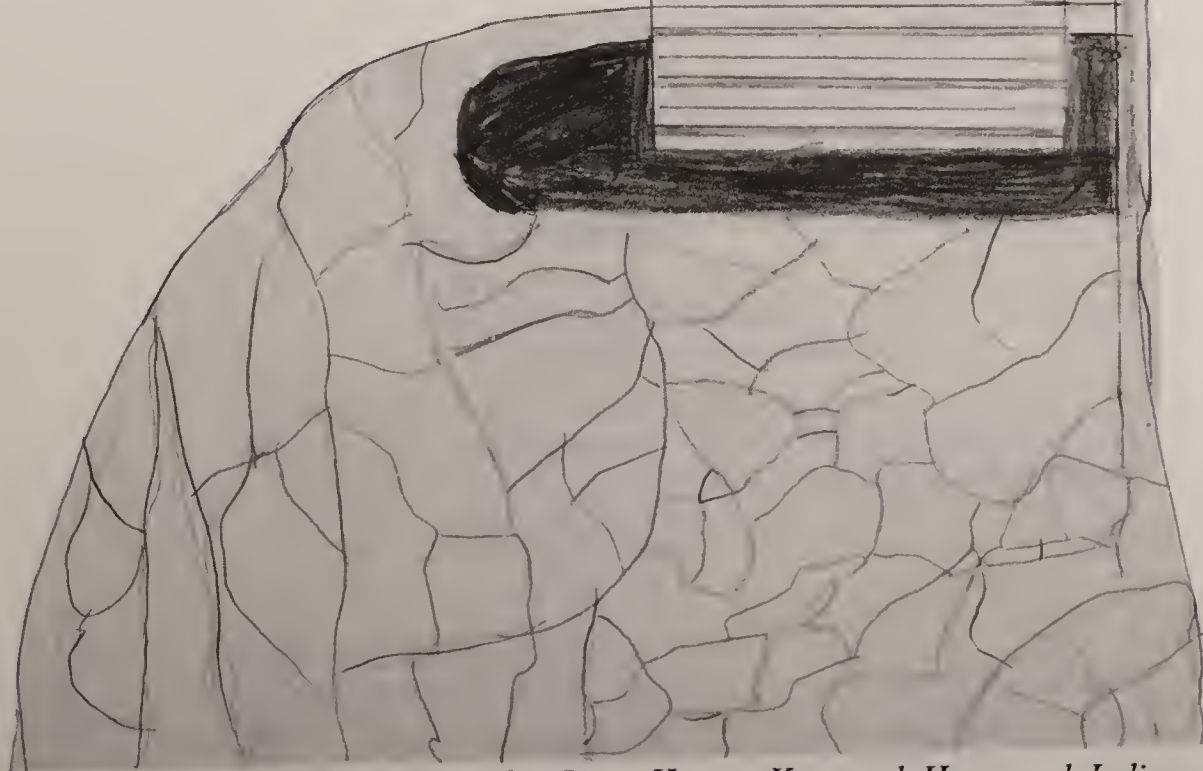
—Sabrina Williams, Grade 3
Riley Elementary
Hammond, Indiana

“Flowers” poem by:

—Stephanie Hogue, Grade 3
Riley Elementary
Hammond, Indiana

“The wild geese coming” by:

—Shira Lee Rodriguez, Grade 4
Saints Peter and Paul School
Brooklyn, New York

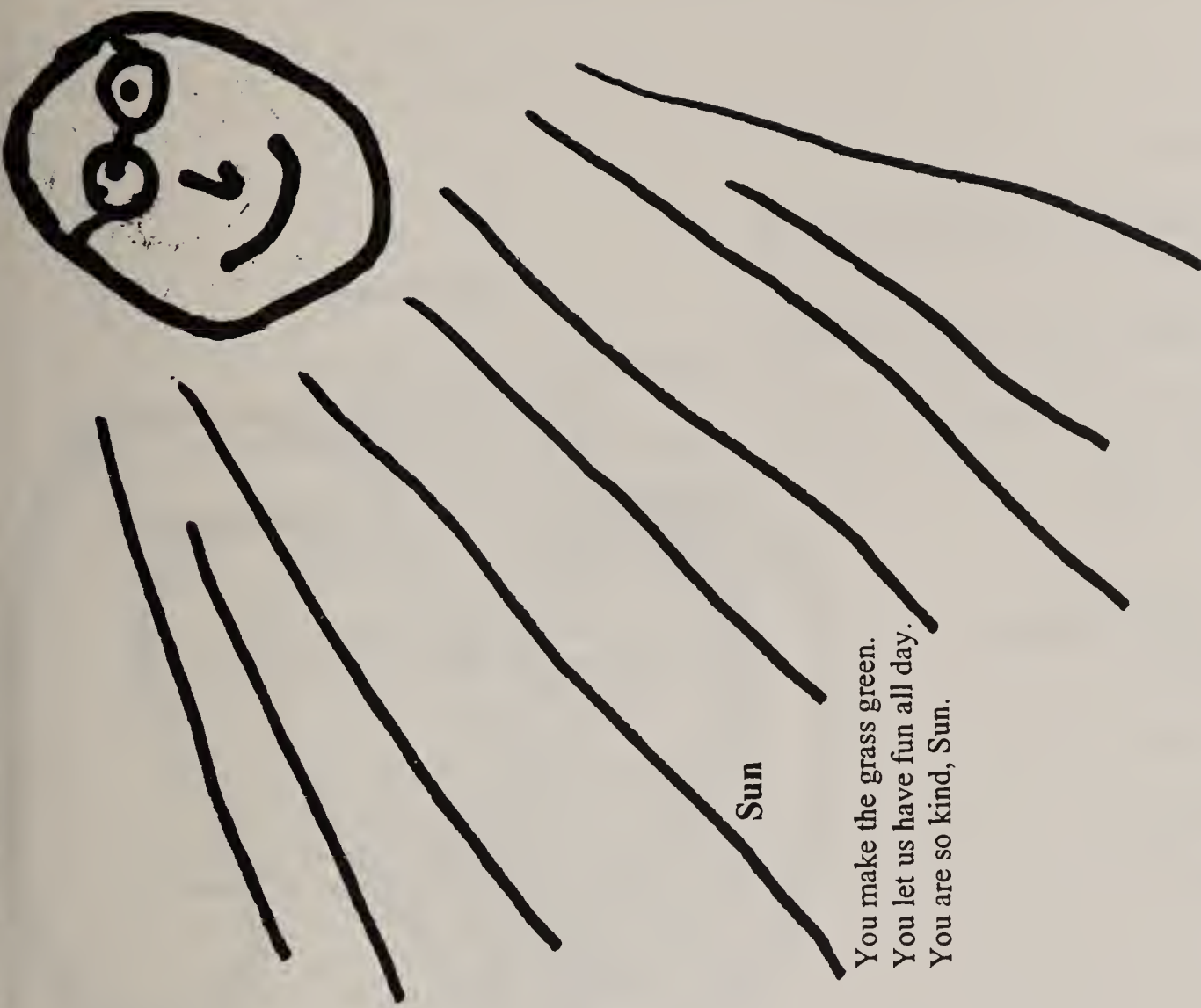
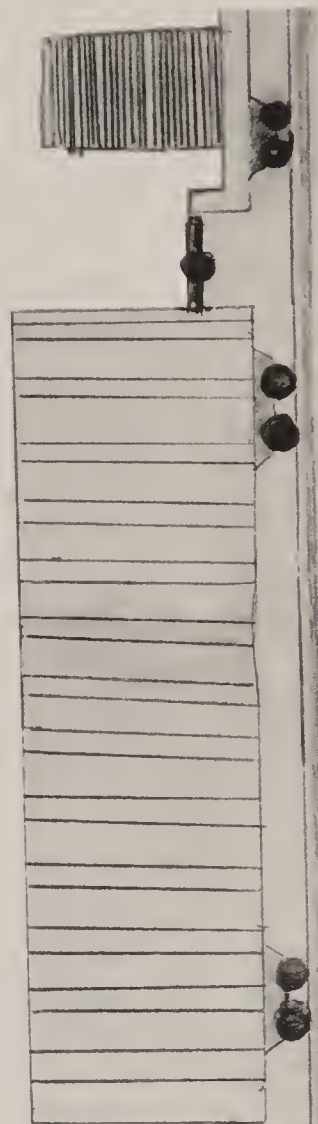


Train by: Brian Hunter, Kenwood, Hammond, Indiana

Flowers

Flowers are pretty.
They have a beautiful scent.
They are everywhere.

The wild geese coming
Through the misty sky behold—
A letter written.



Sun

You make the grass green.
You let us have fun all day.
You are so kind, Sun.

The Storm

The wind howls in its anger,
waving its giant arms about,
grasping, screaming,
reaching out to take you up.

The wind screams and yells,
like an infuriated eagle.
The wind is joined by its friend,
the powerful rain.

The rain lets loose a flood of tears,
pounding the ground with its teardrops.
They join forces together,
groaning, moaning,
causing the creatures to run.

The thunder booms and rolls,
an angered boar.
The trees wave and moan,
warning the wind,
and the rain,

and the thunder.
They slowly decrease,
their angry tirade fading.
Then everything is still.

—Sarah Thevenin, Age 12
Wilbur Wright Middle School
Munster, Indiana

Life

Life is a gift
from God—
sometimes happy,
sometimes sad,
sometimes glad.
It feels like
you're trapped
in a long room.
Then you die.
The door opens,
you leave.

—Christopher Santana, Grade 4
Saints Peter and Paul School
Brooklyn, New York

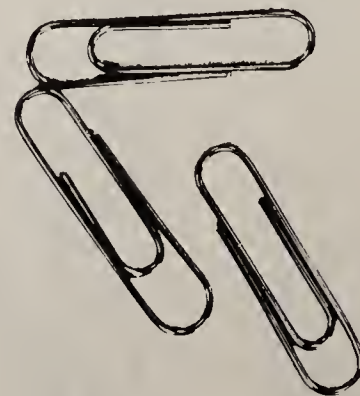
The Pianist

His hands moved along the ivory
like an eagle in flight.
The sounds are so beautiful they filled me
with delight.
With tones so sweet I knew I couldn't compete.
He was the Pianist.

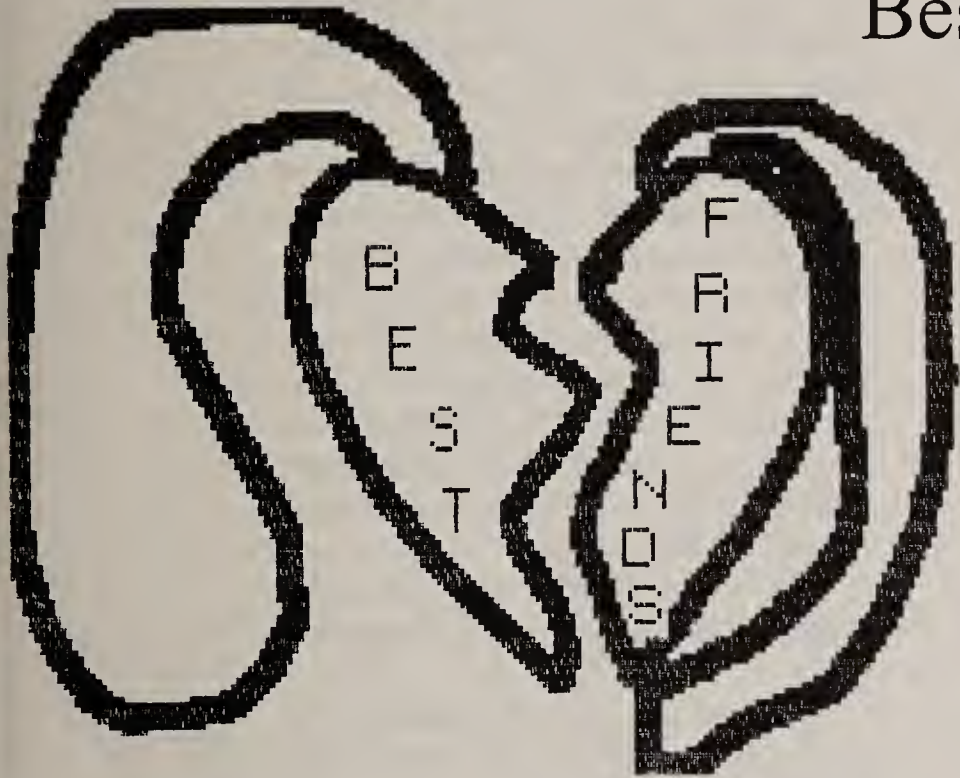
Both soft yet loud, smooth yet bright.
The harmony was perfect, the notes just right.
He was the Pianist.

Frightened at first, nervous till the end,
Calm on the outside, praying within.
When the piece was over the crowd stood
To their feet and roared, "Encore! Encore!"
I *am* the Pianist!

—Brian K. Johnson, Grade 7
Emerson VPA School
Gary, Indiana



Loneliness is. . .
Having both parts of a
Best-friend necklace.



Poem and computer design by:

—Dawn Gregson, Grade 5
Elliott School
Munster, Indiana

My First Love

My first love was the girl next door.
Her name was Rhonda.

Every time I saw her my heart would
melt like butter on a real hot pancake.

One day we were sitting on my steps
getting ready to kiss. My lips puckered
up like a fish slurping his food.

I moved toward her and she moved toward
me, we started to kiss, but we stopped!

She stopped kissing me because she thought
she would get in trouble.

So, she got up and ran home. We never spoke
to each other ever again, but she'll always
be my first love.

—John Trice, Age 13
Emerson VPA School
Gary, Indiana



A SLIP OF THE SLIP

by
Jill A. Davidson

I always thought Mrs. Vance had large calves for a woman her size. She was about 5'7" and had fair blondish-brown hair. She was thin, but not exceedingly. She had many freckles dotting her nice-looking, yet not quite pretty, face. But it was her calves that drew my attention.

Once, near the end of the first semester, I was the first person to arrive in Mrs. Vance's third-grade reading class. She was standing at the front of the room writing on the blackboard. The lace on her slip was sticking out the slightest bit from the bottom of her skirt. I didn't give it much thought as I sat down and began drawing a picture of the baby turtle I'd found that morning in my front yard.

Third grade, as you may know, is a very curious time. It is also overflowing with surprises. I didn't know it yet, but a big surprise was just around the corner.

Her large calves tensing as she sensed the approach of her students, Mrs. Vance turned just in time to see the class file in. First in the door was John Lowe. He strutted in and took a seat in the front row like he always did. He sat and stared at Mrs. Vance. Everyone knew he had a huge crush on her.

Once everyone was seated, Mrs. Vance smiled and pointed to the blackboard where she had written: "I've lost my voice. Today you will read pp. 5-15 in your reading workbook. Please start now." We did. All except John Lowe, that is. John wasn't reading. He hadn't taken his eyes off Mrs. Vance.

She came around her desk toward him. All of a sudden, she stopped dead in her tracks and looked down. The whole class looked up as John shrieked with laughter. Mrs. Vance's slip, all silky and white, was clinging to the middle of her very large calves. Her face turned the color of red rosebuds in full bloom. But, without missing a beat, she continued toward John, gingerly stepping out of the slip and picking the delicate thing up with the toe of one of her pink heels. She stopped in front of

John's desk, opened his book and tipped his head toward it. Then she walked confidently back to her desk as though losing a slip was an ordinary, every day occurrence. By this time the entire class was hysterical with laughter.

I guess we were making a whole lot of noise because Mrs. Rushell from across the hall came over to see what was happening. When she appeared at the door, Mrs. Vance strode across the back of the room with her slip hanging precariously from her pointed finger. Mrs. Rushell put her hand to her mouth to stifle her laughter. Putting on her sternest face, she glared at us until we became quiet.

Mrs. Vance left the room with Mrs. Rushell close behind her. She didn't come back.

When the bell rang, John was the first one out the door. We all knew he was dying to know what happened to Mrs. Vance. The rest of the class followed John into the hall. At first, everything seemed perfectly normal. The flattened carpet under my feet, the handrails, the dull, brown walls of the dark corridor were the same as always.

Then, all of a sudden, something caught my attention—a silky white slip with lace on the bottom glistened in the pale light of the dingy hallway. It was hanging right outside Mrs. Vance's classroom!

The very next morning at school, our third-grade class had another surprise. Mrs. Vance was standing beside her desk, as usual. But, she was not wearing a dress. She wasn't even wearing a skirt. She was wearing slacks! It was the first time we'd ever seen Mrs. Vance in pants!

To this day, I am wary of my slip. I have been known to safety pin it to my underwear, tuck it into the top of my panty hose and even tape it to my stomach! I'm sure I'll never forget Mrs. Vance, her very large calves or the slip of her slip!

—J. A. Davidson, Age 14, attends
Cascia Hall School in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Clouds

Clouds are in the sky.
Sometimes they look like horses.
Clouds are beautiful.



—Stephanie Hogue, Grade 3
Riley Elementary
Hammond, Indiana

What is a Peach?

Peach is a peach.
And the sand on a beach.
Peach is a room
When a flower blooms.
A desk,
A test,
Is the color of peach.
Peach sounds like a choir
And a crackling fire.
Peach sounds like children playing,
And a mother saying,
“I love you.”
Peach smells like a soft, warm day,
And the beginning of May.
Peach smells like the sun,
And children having fun.
Peach feels like soft grass,
And a cage that is brass.
Peach will never end.
Peach is my best friend.

—Emma Cruz, Grade 4
Saints Peter and Paul School
Brooklyn, New York



Illustration by Mary Smith Chant

The Run

My heart pounds from the insatiable hunger for victory.
Sweat dangles off my brow.
The sun beats me with no mercy.

The gun sounds—
And I'm off.
Oblivious to noise,
Blocking out the loud cheers and jeers of an excited crowd—
I run.

Harder, harder,
I run.
Faster, faster,
I run.

I run,
I'm swift,
I fly,
I'm the wind,
And still I run.

Faster, faster,
Harder, harder.

I'm with the wind,
High with the wind,
Fast with the wind,
Hard with the wind.

I run.

Standing on the Beach

Standing on the beach,
Looking at the stars,
Kind of sensing the crescent moon
It doesn't seem that far.
Standing on the beach,
Contemplating waves,
Crashing breakers smash the shore,
Crested, as knaves.
Standing on the beach,
Feeling the chill wind
Creeping into my bones,
Slipping under my skin.
Standing on the beach
Lonely as I am,
With my single set of footprints
Impressed upon the sand.

—Rachel Macek, Age 17
Calumet High School
Gary, Indiana

Nightmare

Nightmare
Creeping pulsation of
Blackness and fear
Fingers dancing icily
Upon a frozen stare

Cry for help
Screams are held
Suspended
They never reach
The air

Darkly present
A smile so knowing
From those who do not
Hear

Imminent forces
Unknown, unenvisioned
But ominously there. . .
Shadows encircle
Obliterate the senses
Finality is near

—April Metz, Age 17
Calumet High School
Gary, Indiana

I've made it.
The insatiable hunger for victory is finally quenched.
The sweat slowly ceases down my brow.
The sun dims,
The echo of the gun is gone. . .

And the run is no more.

—Raven Moore, Age 13
Emerson VPA School
Gary, Indiana



—Megan Popa, Grade 3
Riley Elementary
Hammond, Indiana

Penguins

Penguins are silly.
They like to toboggan down.
Penguins like the snow.


It
has
great
strength
like that
of a sword,
but molds
itself within
us. It is
called simply
a man's
will power.
That is by far
the
greatest
strength
of
all.

—Aaron Wise, Age 16
Morton Senior High
Hammond, Indiana





Illustration by LeeAnna Barber

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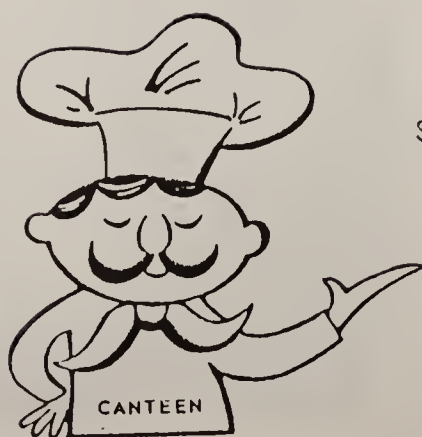
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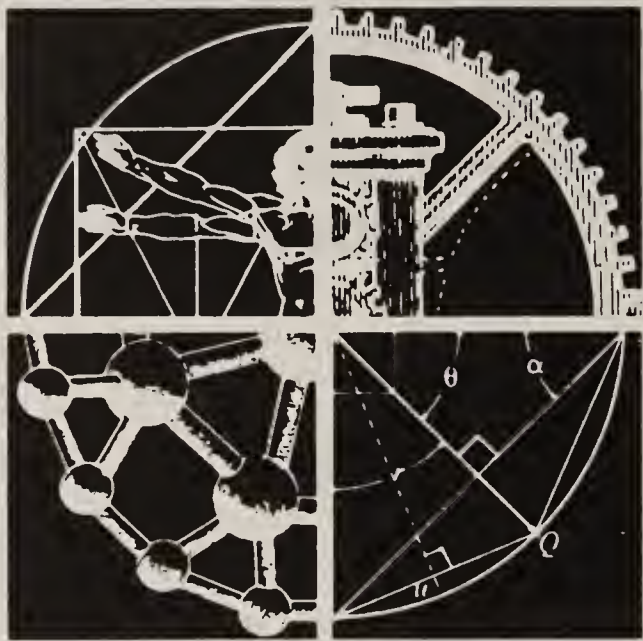
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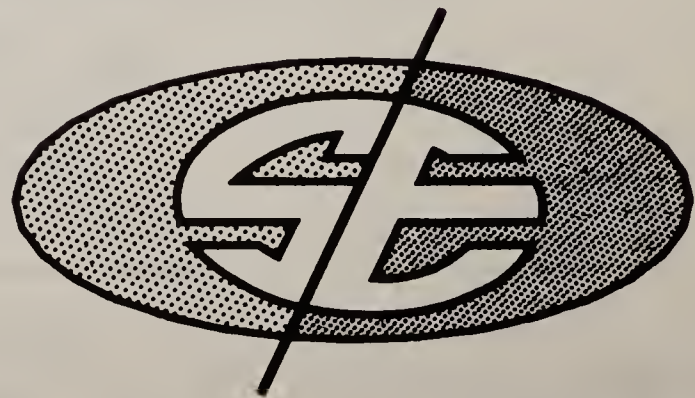
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